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ABSTRACT

Noting that there are students with limited writing ability who belong neither in regular English composition classes nor in classes for speakers of other languages (ESOL), this paper reports on a study conducted at the University of Texas, EL Paso to produce a profile of 30 limited English writers. Following an introduction to the family backgrounds of these students and the nature of the study, the first three sections of the paper discuss three factors that may contribute to their peculiar situation in freshman writing courses, that is, "betwixt and between" ESOL and English. These three factors--the error factor, the discourse factor, and the reading factor--are gleaned from an examination of student writing samples, reading scores, and student interviews. The fourth section provides an interpretation of the results and posits a theoretical explanation for the performance of the students on the writing tasks. This explanation is based on three current theories of the sociology of language to the effect that language competence is inextricably bound to the idea of sociocultural context and that there are multiple reasons, both local and global, for the underachievement of limited English writers. The final section of the paper presents conclusions, specifically that reading, though not the answer to all of the students' problems, is a major consideration, and that reading and writing are part of a continuum and both should be improved to find a working solution in the writing performance of limited English writers. Tables of data are included in the text, and writing prompts and surveys used in the study are appended. (HTH)

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THREE FACTORS IN THE WRITTEN PRODUCTION OF LIMITED ENGLISH WRITERS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSES AT U.T. EL PASO

ED264580

by

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THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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THREE FACTORS IN THE WRITTEN PRODUCTION OF LIMITED ENGLISH WRITERS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION COURSES AT UT EL PASO

APPROVED:

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Dean of the Graduate School

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To

My Husband

and

My Son

PREFACE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the preparation of this work, I am indebted to faculty in the English, linguistics, and mass communications departments at The University of Texas at El Paso. First and foremost, I wish to thank the members of my thesis committee: Dr. Jon Amastae, director, for his untiring efforts in guiding the investigation; Dr. Diana S. Natalicio, for her insightful comments and suggestions; and Dr. David Schwalm, for his careful reading of the manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

It has been frequently observed at The University of Texas at El Paso (U.T. El Paso) that a population of students with limited writing ability exists who belong neither in regular English composition classes nor in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. The students in question are either graduates of accredited American high schools, or they have earned a General Education Development (GED) diploma, and therefore, they do not take ESOL classes designed for the foreign-educated. Instead, they enroll in freshman-level composition courses where they experience difficulty with the pace and subject matter of the course, and they are often doomed to failure. In a phrase, they have been "falling through the cracks" of the system because no course really addresses their needs.

Several semesters of observation have produced a profile of this type of student, hereafter called a limited English writer. First, the majority are Spanish-surnamed and come from households in which Spanish is the language of the home. An interesting finding, however, is that some limited English writers are monolingual English

speakers and others are speakers of the Black English vernacular. Secondly, they appear to have a good command of the spoken language, but their written production reveals serious deficiencies in the written mode. Also, they are predominantly, though not exclusively, from a lower socioeconomic level. Finally, they demonstrate inadequate reading skills in standardized tests of reading and a poor attitude towards reading and writing.

Through a reading and writing assessment project sponsored by the English department in the fall of 1983, some data concerning limited English writers have now been collected. The main aspect of the project was the completion by freshmen of two writing tasks which provided the raw data for the study of their compositions. While the papers in the total sample underwent evaluation according to holistic and primary trait scoring, the papers in a subsample, which are featured in the present investigation, were subjected to additional error and discourse analyses in order to identify the "local" reasons vis-à-vis linguistic structure for the students' failure to communicate effectively in writing. By local reasons is meant surface errors in grammar, mechanics, usage, and organization.

Other aspects of the assessment project included the administration of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and a sociological questionnaire. The scores that the limited English writers made on the standardized reading test will be presented along with actual case histories of some of the students. The purpose in interviewing the students was to add a human dimension to the study, to uncover other variables that may affect their written performance, and to discuss their attitudes towards reading and writing. It is hoped that the "global" reasons for their failure may begin to emerge through this method of inquiry. By global reasons is meant errors that are larger than linguistic structure, such as social, affective, or attitudinal variables that may have an effect on the students' writing ability.

By studying the writing samples of my subjects, by examining their reading scores, and by interviewing them about their reading and writing experiences, I have attempted in this investigation to address the problem of a subgroup of incoming English students at U.T. El Paso and to present three factors that may contribute to their peculiar situation in freshman writing courses; that is, "betwixt and between" ESOL and English.

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Chapter One

THE ERROR FACTOR

Situated along the Texas-Mexican border, The University of Texas at El Paso has a student population of approximately 15,000 students. Its geographical location explains the fact that 55% of its enrollment is comprised of Spanish-speaking students from both sides of the Rio Grande, the political boundary between Texas and Mexico. Also represented in the student body are monolingual English speakers, 40%, and speakers of Black English, 2%, with the remaining 3% divided among other European, Asian, and Middle Eastern language groups. Given this unique circumstance, the University provides excellent opportunities for linguistic studies.

Thus, I was able to study the case of limited English writers from the three major language groups on campus who are struggling with composition in freshman writing courses at the University. In order to understand why these students are having difficulty, I will begin my investigation with an analysis of the type of errors found in their compositions. For purposes of this study, an

error is defined as a deviation from accepted standards of written English.[1]

In the first chapter, I will begin with an explanation of the reading and writing assessment project undertaken by the English department. Then, I will describe my procedure in gathering information about the writing ability of a subsample of limited English writers, who are among the total sample of participants in the writing assessment. The procedure consists of an error analysis which employs two standards of measurement. The first is a checklist of English errors that helps to identify the local writing difficulties of the subsample.

Since it is a popular hypothesis to attribute the problems of Spanish-speaking students in English composition to the influence of Spanish, I will use a second checklist of Spanish/English errors to check for "Spanish interference" in their papers. After the results of the checklists are discussed, I will examine closely two essays in order to demonstrate the writing ability of a limited English writer who is Spanish-speaking. By employing all of the methods above, I hope to uncover where the writing difficulties of limited English students actually lie.

In the fall of 1983, the English department of The University of Texas at El Paso embarked on a reading and writing assessment project. The purpose of the assessment, according to a letter from the chairman of the department to the English department faculty, was to gather ". . . a large amount of information about the writing abilities of incoming students" in order ". . . to improve placement and instruction in the writing program." (Johnson, 1983)

Approximately one-third of all incoming English students participated in the study over a period of two weeks. Class sections were selected at random from the pool of freshman-level English courses--3001-3110, 3110, and 3111/6111. The writing assessment began with the assignment of two writing tasks in the form of prompts, which were given to the students on two separate class days. The instructions were to start the writing tasks in class, to complete them at home, to keep track of the time spent on each assignment, and to return all materials (prompts, notes, drafts, and essays) at the next class meeting.

Prompt I (see Appendix A) instructed the students to think of their many qualities and to select one for which they would most like to be appreciated. Then, they were

to pretend that they were in a small class of strangers and that they had been asked to write an essay of introduction about themselves. This essay was not only supposed to reveal their unique quality but also to relate an experience from their life that demonstrated this trait to their classmates.

In Prompt II (see Appendix B), the students were asked to write an essay in which they analyzed two advertisements, one featuring a man and the other a woman, for the same cigarette brand. Photocopies of the advertisements were attached to the instructions which directed the students to compare and contrast them. The students were to pay particular attention to the words, details, and models appearing in the advertisements, and they were to try to identify the intended audience and the persuasive appeals to that audience.

After the two essays, hereafter called Task I and Task II, were collected, the next step in the assessment project was to administer the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Form E, to the students. In the final part of the assessment, all incoming freshmen students were asked to respond to a survey questionnaire (see Appendix C) consisting of 31 items in order to obtain information about other factors that could have a relationship to writing.[2]

Once the data-gathering part of the assessment project was over, the English department conducted two training sessions for raters in the dual methods of general-impression evaluation--holistic and primary trait--that were to be used in scoring each essay. The purpose of each training session was to achieve calibration or standardization of the raters and the scoring process. To that end, the difference between holistic scoring and primary trait scoring was explained at the first calibration session.

According to the holistic method, a rater reads a paper for an overall or "whole" impression. While surface features such as grammar, syntax, usage, organization, and even length might influence the judgment of a rater, none of these features is specifically looked for or addressed. The rater quickly compares each composition with all the other compositions produced by the group, so that papers are judged against each other and not an ideal.

Primary trait scoring, on the other hand, is a more refined approach in which the rater looks for the particular "trait" demanded by the rhetorical task. Compositions are not judged against each other but according to what extent they exhibit this trait. For example, in Task I the primary trait to look for would be

the development of a narrative illustrating one's best quality, and in Task II the primary trait would be the comparison-contrast analysis of two advertisements.

After these methods were explained, the actual calibration of the raters began. First, they had to scan a set of sample student papers and rate them according to a scoring guide developed by the Educational Testing Service which contains five categories--4, high; 3, high-medium; 2, low-medium; 1, low; and 0. The category of zero is reserved for papers that are unintelligible or that do not complete the task. Each rater evaluated the sample papers, keeping the score secret until the other raters had finished. Then, the evaluations were compared, and the standards for grading that particular set of papers were decided upon. By following this procedure, the raters were carefully calibrated and conformed in the training sessions.

In the subsequent grading sessions, the calibration of the raters was first achieved by the method described above, and then the actual grading began. Each Task I paper was evaluated by two raters using the holistic technique at one grading session and the primary trait technique at another session. Then, all Task II papers were subjected to the same procedure until the monumental

task of evaluating hundreds of papers fairly was accomplished.

Once the grading aspect of the writing assessment was completed, the next step was the tabulation of the composition ratings, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test scores, and the answers to the questionnaire by the Writing Assessment Committee. When the compilations were finished, the committee made the results available in a report. In brief, the report showed that writing quality increased with course level, that students at all class levels scored higher on Task II than Task I, and that the distributions for holistic and primary trait scoring are different for Task I but are more similar for Task II. Also, the mean grade level for the total sample on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test was 11.1 in vocabulary, 10.7 in reading comprehension with a total score of 10.9 for all classifications. Further, the questionnaire revealed that the students in the total sample were graduates of local high schools, divided almost equally between male and female subjects, and more than half considered themselves bilingual, among other findings. (Dick et al., 1985)

Since researchers in the English department or other departments were invited to peruse the data, I availed myself of the materials in order to study the written

production of limited English writers who were enrolling in college for the first time. Because I felt that this group of students would typically receive low scores on composition assignments, I took an informal sample in order to study the errors contained in their essays. Thus, I randomly selected a subset of 60 papers (30 each from the stacks of Task I and Task II compositions) that had received a low rating. Table I shows the distribution by a unique number assigned to each student, sex, language group, class level and score. In the subsample, there were 16 females (53%) and 14 males (47%). Of these, the linguistic make-up was as follows: 19 (63%) were Spanish speakers, nine (30%) were monolingual English speakers, and two (7%) were speakers of the Black English vernacular. My criteria for determining the language group to which each subject belonged were their family name and certain linguistic features in the compositions.

Representing the class levels, 12 students (40%) were enrolled in a developmental English course (3001-3110), eight (26%) in a basic English composition course (3110), and five (17%) in an expository English composition course (3111). Because some students failed to give the information, the class level was not verifiable for five students (17%). The scores that each student received in

Tasks I and II are shown in Table 1 by both holistic and primary trait ratings. The number on the left side of the slash indicates the score that the first rater gave, and the number on the right side indicates the score which the second rater assigned to the task. Although the scores range from one to four in a few cases, the majority are in the one to two range. A few students wrote papers that were unscorable and these are indicated by a zero in the column for ratings. However, the "zero" papers were analyzed for surface features (errors and discourse) in the present study even though they did not receive a score according to holistic and primary trait ratings.

In order to compare the dual scores of the students in the subsample with those of the students in the total sample, I adopted the same method that the Writing Assessment Committee had used in the preparation of their report; that is, I totaled the dual scores that each paper had received. For example, a paper with a score of 1/1 was considered a "2" paper, a score of 1/2 meant a "3" paper, etc. Since the ETS method of scoring uses a scale of one to four, the possible combinations of ratings on the papers range from two to eight. (Dick et al., 1985)

I then arranged the data into a series of bar graphs (Figures 1 to 4) that indicate the differences in the

frequency distribution of ratings for the total sample and the subsample by task and method of scoring with percentages.[3] Although the main purpose of my investigation is not to compare the total sample in the reading and writing assessment with my subsample, I will make some comparisons to show basic differences between the two samples. For example, Figures 1 and 3 show that the total sample was able to perform better on Task II than on Task I, while Figures 2 and 4 show that the subsample was able to handle Task I better than Task II, according to primary trait scoring. The reasons why the subsample did better on Task I involve the complexity, the discourse aims, and the cognitive demands of each task, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Table 1

Description of Subjects by Sex, Language Group, Class Level, and Score

Student No.	Sex	*Language Group	Class Level	Score			
				Task I		Task II	
				**H	***P	H	P
1	M	S	3001-3110	2/2	3/2	2/2	2/2
2	M	M	3111	0	0	2/1	1/2
3	M	M	3110	1/2	1/1	1/1	1/2
4	M	M	3110	1/1	1/1	2/1	2/1
5	F	M	3110	2/2	4/3	1/2	1/2
6	M	S		2/2	1/1	1/1	2/2
7	M	S	3001-3110	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
8	M	S		1/2	1/1	1/1	1/1
9	M	S		2/1	2/1	1/1	2/1
10	M	S	3110	1/2	2/2	1/1	2/1
11	F	S	3111	0	0	1/1	1/1
12	F	S	3001-3110	2/3	2/2	1/2	1/2
13	F	S	3110	1/1	1/1	2/1	1/1
14	M	S	3001-3110	3/3	2/2	1/2	2/1
15	F	M	3001-3110	1/2	1/2	2/1	1/1
16	F	M	3110	2/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
17	F	S	3001-3110	2/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
18	F	M	3110	2/2	1/1	1/1	1/1
19	M	B	3001-3110	0	0	1/1	1/1
20	F	B	3001-3110	2/2	2/2	1/1	2/1

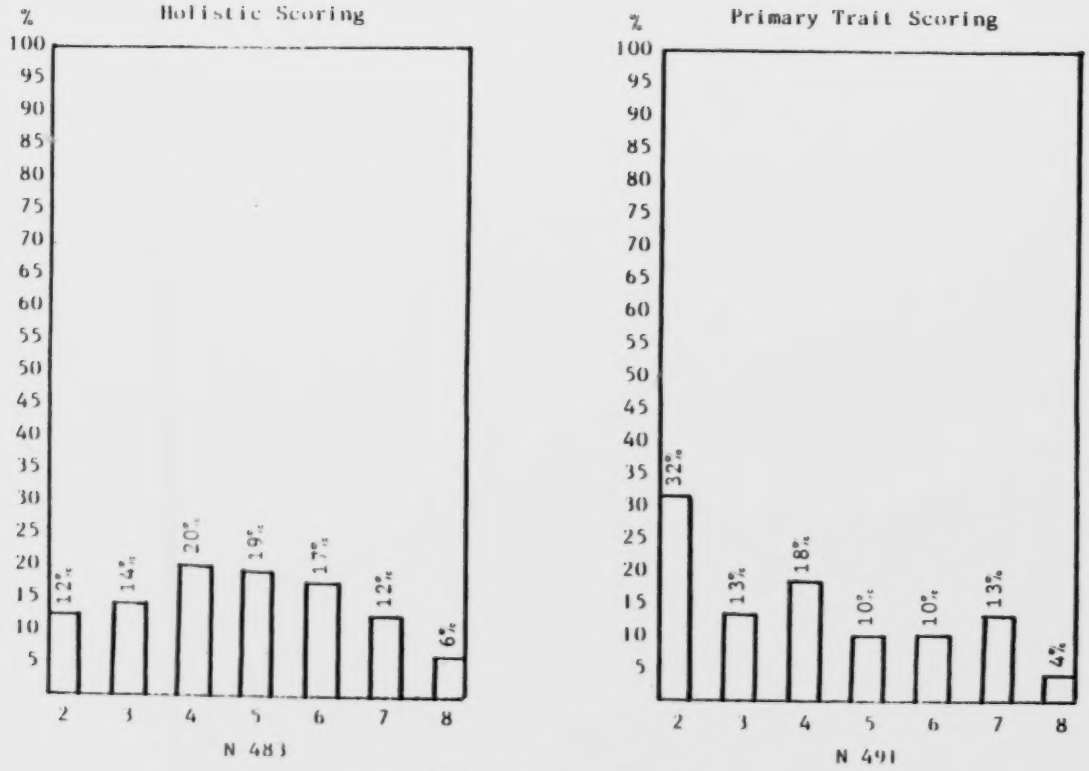
Table 1 (continued)

Description of Subjects by Sex, Language Group, Class Level, and Score

Student No.	Sex	*Language Group	Class Level	Score			
				Task I		Task II	
				**H	***P	H	P
21	M	S	3111	2/2	1/1	1/1	1/2
22	M	M	3111	3/2	3/3	1/1	2/1
23	F	S	3001-3110	1/1	1/1	1/1	2/2
24	F	S	3111	4/4	3/3	1/1	2/2
25	F	S	3001-3110	1/1	2/2	1/1	2/1
26	F	S	3001-3110	1/1	1/1	1/2	2/2
27	F	S		2/2	1/1	1/1	1/1
28	M	S	3001-3110	1/1	1/2	2/2	2/1
29	F	M		2/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
30	F	S	3110	1/1	2/3	1/1	2/1

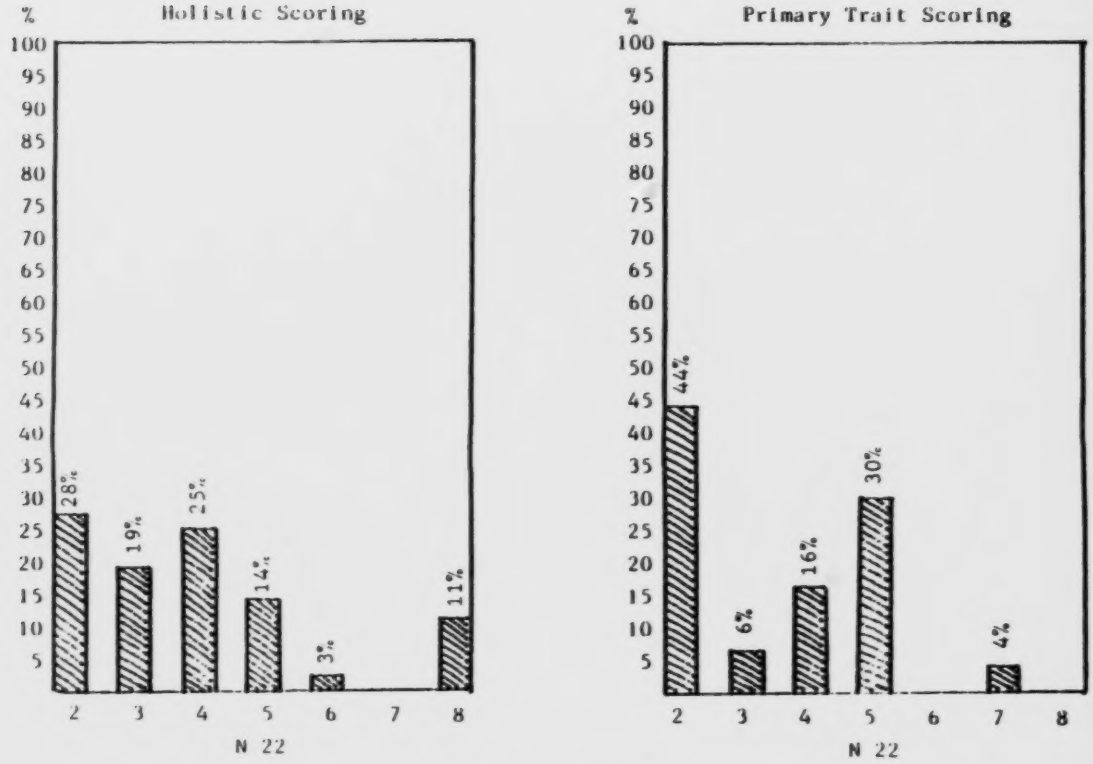
* M = monolingual English speaker
S = Spanish speaker
B = Black English speaker
** H = Holistic method
*** P = Primary trait method

Figure 1



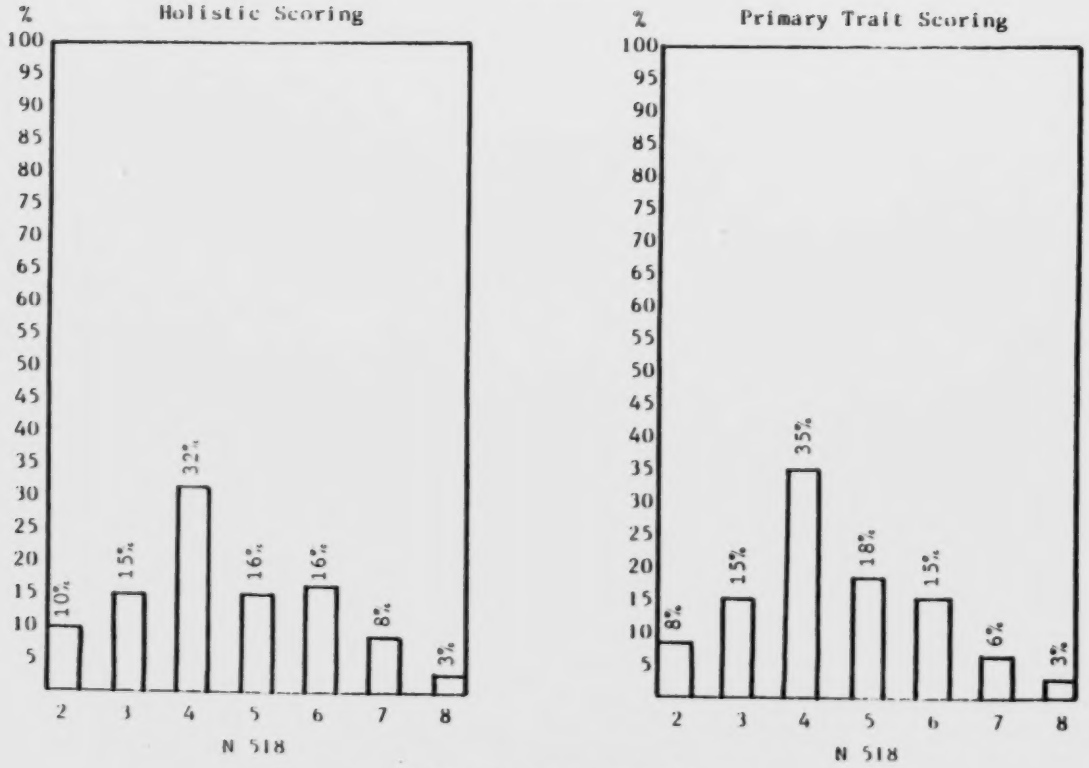
Task 1 (Total Sample)
Frequency Distribution by Scoring
Methods with Percentages

Figure 2



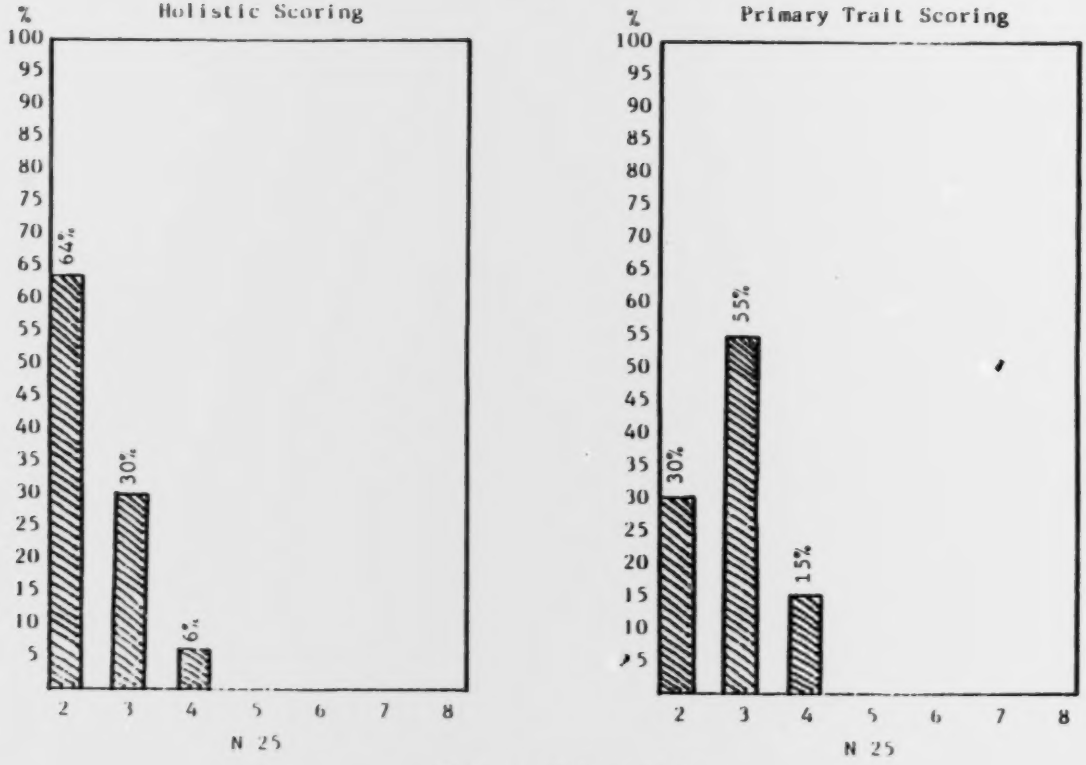
Task 1 (Subsample)
Frequency Distribution by Scoring
Methods with Percentages

Figure 3



Task II (Total Sample)
Frequency Distribution by Scoring
Methods with Percentages

Figure 4



Task 11 (Subsample)
Frequency Distribution by Scoring
Methods with Percentages

After the selection of the subsample by the process explained above, the papers were subjected to additional detailed analyses. I used the two checklists of quantifiable features, one for assessing errors in English (see Appendix D) and the other for assessing Spanish/English errors (see Appendix E) that had been developed by the Writing Assessment Committee. By using these checklists, I could examine surface errors in English and identify those papers with "Spanish interference."[4]

The first step, therefore, was to use the English checklist in order to determine which errors were the local impediments to effective communication in the Task I and Task II papers of the 30 subjects whom I believed might be limited in their use of English. Next, I used the checklist of Spanish/English errors so that I could ascertain if there were any Spanish language barriers to good writing in the papers of Spanish-speaking students. In the subsequent tables, I will present the results of the frequency counts of both English and Spanish-influenced errors. The following table (Table 2) involves the quantifiable English errors in Task I. The categories of errors are those found in the checklist of English errors (Appendix D) in order to ensure uniformity between the checklist and Table 2:

Table 2

Task I (Personal Attribute)--Quantifiable English Errors

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency
Sentence fragments	14
Run-on sentences	59
Awkward sentences	0
Faulty parallelism	21
Unclear pronoun reference	8
Illogical (incoherent) constructions	15
Homonym errors	17
Misspelled words	132
Subject/verb agreement errors	13
Pronoun agreement	0
Punctuation errors (not comma)	53
Capitalization errors	25
Comma errors (not comma splice)	16
Possession errors	0
Word choice errors	50

When the quantifiable English errors in Task I compositions were tabulated in Table 2, I found that misspellings (132) were the most frequent type of error, followed by run-on sentences (59), errors in punctuation

(53), and errors in word choice (50).[5] In descending order, the frequency of the other errors were: capitalization (25), faulty parallelism (21), homonyms (17), commas (16), illogical or incoherent constructions (15), sentence fragments (14), subject/verb agreement (13), unclear pronoun reference (8), pronoun agreement (0), awkward sentences (0), and possession errors (0).

Using some of the major categories of errors in the original coding sheet (see Appendix F) developed by the Writing Assessment Committee, Table 3 shows figures for the categories and an example:[6]

Table 3

Task I (Personal Attribute)--Quantifiable English Errors By Category with Examples

Categories of Errors		Frequency	Per 100 Words
Sentence problems	Total=	109	
Fragments:		14	.002
Taking time to make them feel they are most important at that particular moment.			
Run-ons:		59	.008
I think of myself as a pretty good guy, I like to do a lot of things for fun.			
Awkward sentences:		0	.000
Faulty parallelism:		21	.003
I have had the responsibility of commanding a group of students just like me and be abl to get them going on the right track.			
Illogical (incoherent) constructions:		15	.002
At trouble times I try never to conflict them with anybody.			
Verb problems	Total=	13	
Subject/verb agreement:		13	.002
It does not necessarly has to be someone real close to me in order for me to listen to them...			
Pronoun problems	Total=	8	
Unclear pronoun reference:		8	.001
I will tell you why. This happened to me one day at work.			

Table 3 (continued)

Categories of Errors	Frequency	Per 100 Words
Pronoun agreement:	0	.000
Possession:	0	.000
Mechanical problems	Total= 243	
Homonyms:	17	.003
I am a person who's qualities include courtesy, respect, honesty, disipline		
Misspelled words:	132	.021
I have recive a cross country award in high school and I made the cross country all state team my senor year.		
Punctuation:	53	.008
Being aware of my faults and wrongs; being aware of what makes my day; this awareness helps me in being considerate.		
Commas:	16	.003
It's very hard to keep secrets, that may affect one's life, confidential.		
Capitalization:	25	.004
I started working with the state Vet, and that caught my attention most of all.		

Table 3 (continued)

Categories of Errors	Frequency	Per 100 Words
Vocabulary problems	Total= 50	.008
Word choice:		
People have told me that the characteristic of mine that stands out the most is my ambitiousness.		

By this grouping, Table 3 demonstrates that mechanical errors (243) are the major category of error followed by sentence problems (109), vocabulary (50), pronouns (8), and verbs (13) in Task I for the 30 students whose compositions are under scrutiny in this investigation.

In Task II, the comparison and contrast of two advertisements, the frequency count of English errors gave the following results as shown in Table 4. Again, the categories of errors parallel those found in the original checklist of English errors (Appendix D):

Table 4

Task II (Advertisements)--Quantifiable English Errors

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency
Sentence fragments	14
Run-on sentences	33
Awkward sentences	0
Faulty parallelism	20
Unclear pronoun reference	35
Illogical (incoherent) constructions	24
Homonym errors	23
Misspelled words	109
Subject/verb agreement errors	26
Pronoun agreement	12
Punctuation errors (not comma)	31
Capitalization errors	23
Comma errors (not comma splice)	26
Possession errors	9
Word choice errors	48

As shown in Table 4, misspellings (109) are the leading type of error, and word choice problems (48) are second in number. These are followed in descending order by unclear pronoun reference (35), run-on sentences (33), punctuation (31), subject/verb agreement and comma error (26), illogical or incoherent constructions (24), homonym and capitalization errors (23), faulty parallelism (20), sentence fragments (14), pronoun agreement errors (12), possession errors (9), and awkward sentences (0).

When these features are grouped once again into broader categories of errors, they reveal the main problem areas in Task II, which I will illustrate with examples in Table 5:

Table 5

Task II (Advertisements)--Quantifiable English Errors by Category with Examples

Categories of Errors		Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words
Sentence problems	Total=	91	
Fragments:		14	.003
The background which gives the illusion of adventure, showing the rugged sea and mountains.			
Run-on sentences:		33	.008
The man is sitting upon his boat admiring the treasure he found, while he is doing this he is enjoying a cigarette.			
Awkward sentences:		0	.000
Faulty parallelism:		20	.005
They alway(s) have (to) a person enjoy his job and smoking a cigarette.			
Illogical (incoherent) constructions:		24	.006
The concepts and comparison of each ad are most likely compared. (This example could also be a lexical problem.)			
Verb problems	Total=	26	
Subject/verb agreement:			
By looking at the picture, she look ambitious.			
Pronoun problems	Total=	56	
Unclear pronoun reference:		35	.008
These ads are the same in the way they show how they became successful . . .			

Table 5 (continued)

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words
Pronoun agreement:	12	.003
The specific details in each ad accomplish these appeals by the way the model projects themselves to the audience or viewers.		
Possession:	9	.002
The companies purposes are to attract both sex(es) to the Vantage cigarette.		
Mechanical problems	Total= 212	
Homonyms:	23	.005
So the likeness of these ads are getting both audiences to believe they can obtain this by smoking there particular brand of cigarette.		
Misspelled words:	109	.025
The add of the Girl is trying to get the attension of all the working women.		
Punctuation:	31	.007
For example, remember when you could not draw a straight line in high school. (no question mark)		
Commas:	26	.006
She's tasting success, and is seeing success on her first gallery show.		

Table 5 (continued)

Capitalization:		23	.005
The difference between the two are that the Diving ad is adventurous and demanding of physical strength . . .			
Vocabulary problems	Total=	48	
Word choice:		48	.011
. . . there are differences between the two advertizes . . .			

As was the case in Task I compositions, mechanical problems (212) also abound in Task II papers, followed by sentence problems (91), pronoun problems (56), vocabulary problems (48), and verb problems (26).

Another table (Table 6) will showcase these results more clearly:

Table 6

Frequency Count of English Errors by Category and Task

Category	Task I	Task II
Mechanical problems	243	212
Sentence problems	109	91
Vocabulary problems	50	48
Pronoun problems	8	56
Verb problems	13	26
	423	433

(Total=856)

In Tables 2 through 6 many of the structural writing problems of limited English writers could be found by utilizing the English checklist. For the purposes of this study, however, it is important to repeat the process of identifying errors by using a checklist of Spanish/English

errors which assumes Spanish interference and that it takes a certain form.7

The following table (Table 7) tallies the occurrence of errors due to Spanish in both the Task I and Task II compositions of the 19 Spanish-speaking students in the subsample and presents examples where applicable. Except for appearing in abbreviated form, the categories of errors are similar to the checklist of Spanish/English errors (Appendix E) in order to provide some parallelism:

Table 7

Task I and Task II--Quantifiable Spanish/English Errors by Category and Frequency with Examples

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Total
	Task I		Task II		
Lexical differentiation:	22	.004	20	.005	42
To my classmates, I recommend to follow my quality on helping people achieve their goals and accomplishments . . .					
Incorrect preposition in idioms:	6	.001	0	0	6
I am not afraid at jumping to the chance or opportunity.					
Faulty adjective agreement (or noun phrase compound structure):	0	0	1	.000	1
The advirtsers are trying to sell the product to cigarettes smokers through these 2 persons.					
Faulty gender agreement:	0	0	0	0	0
Faulty subject/verb agreement with 2nd person singular or 3rd person singular:	1	.000	5	.001	6
. . . she look ambitious.					

Table 7 (continued)

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Total
	Task I		Task II		
Omission of infinitive marker:	1	.000	0	0	1
In order for the human race get through life with ease . . .					
Omission of auxilliary do:	0	0	0	0	0
Omission of preposition in two-word verb:	2	.000	3	.000	5
Consumers have many benefits . . . like having a lot of variety to choose (from) . . .					
Omission of indefinite article before predicate nominative:	0	0	0	0	0
Omission of by from by...ing adverbial phrase of manner:	0	0	0	0	0
Omission of subject pronouns:	2	.000	7	.002	9
And the people buy those cigarettes because are going to be tested . . .					
Use of definite article with subject nouns in generalizations:	4	.001	7	.002	11
I also enjoy having the people say thank you . . .					

Table 7 (continued)

Categories of Errors	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Raw Frequency	Per 100 Words	Total
	Task I		Task II		
Use of clause instead of to/for complement with verbs of influence:	1	.000	0	0	1
. . . I don't want that at first they show us . . .					
Use of infinitive instead of -ing form in nominalization:	4	.001	1	.000	5
The advertisers did a very good job to display their brand.					
Use of simple present instead of progressive for future:	0	0	0	0	0
Use of 'to go to' instead of 'to be going to':	0	0	0	0	0
	(Total=87)				

Table 7 shows that a total of 87 Spanish/English errors occurred in the 38 papers (19 each for Tasks I and II) of Spanish-speaking students. Also, Table 7 supplies the information that the highest incidence of Spanish influenced errors in Task I and Task II papers occurs in the area of lexical differentiation (42), followed by use of the definite article (11), omission of subject pronouns (9), incorrect prepositions and faulty subject/verb agreement (6), omission of prepositions (5), use of infinitive (5), and redundant noun modifier, omission of infinitive marker, and use of clause (1). These findings corroborate the evidence found in Judy McQuade's (1980) study of errors affecting the composition performance of students at Pan American University who are predominantly Spanish-surnamed (76.6 percent). She notes that errors in lexical differentiation (especially the in/on variety) account for only a "small number of errors overall," and she goes on to stress "the questionableness of interference as an explanatory hypothesis" in assessing the writing ability of these students. Similarly, this investigation shows that while Spanish-influenced errors do occur, they are insignificant in number and type and do not seriously impede effective communication. Thus, I have shown that English and not Spanish-influenced errors

are responsible for the poor writing performance of the 19 students who are deemed Spanish-speaking in this study.

Having analyzed all the compositions according to the frequency of errors due to English and Spanish, I will now pay particular attention to the Task I and Task II compositions of one of the participants in the writing assessment project. My subject was a first-semester freshman who had enrolled in a basic composition course consisting of six hours of instruction weekly for students on provisional status, an admission option for students whose credentials do not qualify them for regular admission. The student was a 19 year-old female who fit the profile of the majority of limited English writers (Spanish-surnamed, low socioeconomic status, good oral facility vs. bad writing, and poor reading ability on tests). Also, her written production was typical of Spanish-speaking students with limited writing ability in that there were a greater number of developmental English errors compared with virtually none influenced by Spanish, as I will demonstrate.

For Task I (personal attribute), the student wrote an essay of 112 words containing six sentences and a total number of four T-units. As defined by Hunt (1965), a T-unit is "a minimal terminable unit . . . minimal as to

length [at one end] and a period [at the other]." What this statement means is that a T-unit is a main clause plus any or all embedded or added clauses. As far as cohesion in her essay is concerned, I found attempts at cohesion but little or no coherence. When I examined her paragraphing skills, I found only one indentation. Following is her Task I essay:

Task I--Personal Attribute

> I feel I'm considered or at least try to be. I'm sensitative to other peoples feelings, opinions and view about anything that they mite talk about. Every one has their own opinion or views about certain things so do I and if there're different from mine. I never try to put them down or say something that mite hurt them, instead I respect them for speaking out their own opinions. Its very rare that I hurt anyone intentionally I always try to avoid getting into arguments or disagreements over things that just don't matter. If I feel I did anything wrong to someone I always say I'm sorry only if was my wrong doing.

When I applied the English checklist to the composition, it revealed numerous problems with:

Run-on sentences (2):

Every one has their own opinion or views about certain things so do I.

Its very rare that I hurt anyone intentionally I always try to avoid getting into arguments or disagreements over things that just don't matter.

Homonyms (1):

. . . if there're different from mine.

Misspellings (3):

every one mite wrong doing

Pronoun agreement (1):

Every one has their own opinion or views about certain things . . .

Punctuation (3): (not comma)

. . . and if there're different from mine. I never try to . . .

(period instead of comma)

I'm sensitative to other peoples feelings . . .
(no apostrophe)

Commas (2): (not comma splice)

. . . I never try to put them down or say something that mite hurt them, instead I respect them . . . (comma instead of semicolon)

If I feel I did anything wrong to someone I always say I'm sorry . . . (no comma after clause)

Word choice (3):

considered (considerate)

sensitative
(This item may be an interlanguage error; that is, a self-constructed word that is not a part of the student's

first or second language, but instead falls between the two.)

least (at least)

Some errors that are not enumerated in the checklist but deserve mention are:

Omission of preposition (2):

. . . I respect them for speaking out (about) their own opinions.

I feel I'm considered or (at) least try to be.

Omission of conjunction (1):

. . . I always say I'm sorry (but) only if was my wrong doing.

In Task II, the comparison-contrast essay of two advertisements, the student wrote somewhat less, 90 words. There were a total of four sentences in the piece and only two T-units. Her attempts at cohesion and coherence were more successful, and her paragraphing is still limited to a single paragraph:

Task II--Advertisements

> In this two ads their both selling the same products. The difference in the ads the first one has a women and second has a man with different campaigns. Advertisers are trying to sell to woman and people Who are trying to be known, also to the man Who is bringing out the

past to the present and its very satisfieing.

In accomplishing the specfic details to persuade people showing the woman and the man and saying specfically word for word What they want to bring out in the audience.

When applied to this essay, the checklist demonstrates that there are errors with:

Sentence fragments (2):

The difference in the ads . . .

In accomplishing the specfic details to persuade people showing the woman and the man and saying specfically word for word What they want to bring out in the audience.

Run-on sentences (1):

Advertisers are trying to sell to woman and people who are trying to be known, also to the man who is bringing out the past to the present and its very satisfieing.

Unclear pronoun reference (2):

. . . and <u>its</u> very satisfieing.

. . . what <u>they</u> want to bring out in the audience.

Illogical (incoherent) constructions (2):

Advertisers are trying to sell to woman and people who are trying to be known, also t the man who is bringing out the past to the present and its very satisfieing.

In accomplishing the specfic details to persuade people showing the woman and the man and saying specfically word for word What they want to bring out in the audience.

Homonyms (1):

In this two ads <u>their</u> both selling . . .

Misspellings (3):

satisfieing specfic specfically

Punctuation (1):

. . . its very satisfieing. (apostrophe missing)

Capitalization (3):

. . . people Who are trying to be known . . .

. . . the man Who is bringing out the past to the present . . .

. . . word for word What they want to bring out in the audience.

Word choice (1):

. . . and the second has a man with different campaigns.

Not included in the checklist are other errors:

Omission of conjunction (1):

Advertisers are trying to sell to woman and people Who are trying to be known, (and) also to the man Who is bringing out the past to the present and its very satisfieing.

Singular and plural distinction (3):

In this two ads their both selling the same products.

. . . the first one has a women . . .

Advertisers are trying to sell to woman and people . . .

When the checklist of errors due to Spanish was used, I discovered that the student's essay on her personal attribute (Task I) contained only one error that can be attributed to the influence of Spanish; that is, the omission of a subject pronoun:

I only say I'm sorry only if (it) was my wrong doing. In the essay on the two cigarette advertisements (Task II), I also found only one error, the probable confusion of the sound [i] for [I] in the word this [ðIs].

Aside from these two errors, there is nothing else in her essay to indicate that she suffers from "Spanish interference" as is generally believed to be the case in the written production of limited English writers who have Spanish surnames. Her problems with run-on sentences, fragments, faulty parallelism, incoherent constructions, unclear pronoun reference, pronoun agreement, homonyms, misspellings, punctuation, capitalization, commas, and word choice are the same errors that any developmental writer might have.

It should be noted that when we speak of Spanish interfering with English we are assuming some level of competence in Spanish on the part of the student. However, the speaking or writing ability in Spanish of the Spanish-speaking students in the subsample was not measured; therefore, their actual capability in Spanish has not been established. Only some evidence of interference at the structural level was revealed by the English/Spanish checklist, so that future research is

needed to resolve the students' real competence in Spanish (spoken and written).

In conclusion, I have shown the results of English and Spanish/English error analyses in this chapter. In addition, I have presented two essays written by a Spanish-speaking, limited English writer for a comparison of the type of errors, English or Spanish-influenced, found in her written production.

Chapter Two

THE DISCOURSE FACTOR

In the preceding chapter, an error analysis of the compositions of limited English writers showed the mechanical, lexical, and syntactical errors which contributed to their inability to communicate effectively in writing. In this chapter, I will try to analyze the semantic contents of the compositions in both a quantitative and a qualitative manner in order to continue my investigation into the subsample's difficulty with written discourse.[8]

My procedure will consist of an examination of Task I and Task II papers for the total number of words, sentences, and T-units used and for the control of paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence, which are organizational features of the checklist of English errors. In order to begin the analysis, I tallied the total number of words that each assignment (Task I and Task II) produced. Because of the different discourse aims of Task I (description/narration) and Task II (comparison-contrast), I assumed that the "easier" assignment, Task I, would engender more words than the

"harder" assignment, Task II for the following reasons: In Task I the students were writing from personal experience to an audience of classmates for the purpose of getting to know one another, whereas in Task II the topic was not familiar, the intended audience was not evident, and the purpose of the assignment was not clear to them.

To begin the analysis, I once again scrutinized all 60 compositions--30 each for Tasks I and II--which I had used in the error analysis. In Table 8 I present the list of students by their unique numbers and the tabulation of the total words found in Task I and Task II:

Table 8

Total Words by Student Number and Task

Student Number	Total Words	
	Task I	Task II
1	189	+200
2	147	139
3	249	151
4	142	+159
5	321	127
6	151	+278
7	160	107
8	137	77
9	180	85
10	157	144
11	209	183
12	197	+203
13	213	195
14	376	152
15	287	184
16	188	82
17	112	90
18	111	+120
19	200	149

Table 8 (continued)

Student Number		Total Words	
		Task I	Task II
20		170	115
21		179	147
22		147	73
23		130	82
24		344	140
25		597	109
26		93	+237
27		150	77
28		255	+278
29		261	96
30		187	183
		6,239	4,362
	Mean	207	195
	SD	99.09	44.01

Table 8 shows that the total number of words written in Task I papers was 6,239 words compared to 4,362 words for Task II papers. This means that indeed 1,877 more words were produced in the "easier" task than in the "harder" task by a margin of 30%. The mean length of Task I papers was 207 words with a standard deviation of 99.09 and a mean length of 195 words for Task II papers with a standard deviation of 44.01.

In seven instances, indicated by a plus sign on Table 8, a student actually wrote more words in Task II, but this occurrence may have been due to reluctance on the part of some students to write about themselves. As student #26 stated in her beginning sentence in Task I, "I'm not a very good person to find out about myself, about my qualities." Later in this chapter I will discuss other reasons that may underlie a discrepancy in the words that are generated when there is a change in discourse topic.

Following the word count, I tallied the number of sentences in each composition. By "sentence" is meant a unit of thought that begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. In the case of the written production of limited English writers, this definition includes complete sentences, run-ons, and fragments. Thus, I theorized that

more sentences would appear in the assignment in which the writer had to compare and contrast two cigarette advertisements. I used the same procedure for this calculation as I had used in the word count; that is, I listed the writers by their unique numbers, the writing assignments by task, and the total number of sentences under the appropriate column (Table 9):

Table 9

Total Sentences by Student Number and Task

Student Number	Total Sentences	
	Task I	Task II
1	11	+13
2	7	5
3	15	8
4	7	+8
5	18	9
6	11	+20
7	9	6
8	8	4
9	9	6
10	6	* +8
11	15	13
12	10	5
13	10	* +11
14	8	8
15	9	5
16	13	5
17	6	4
18	8	5
19	16	6

Table 9 (continued)

Student Number		Total Sentences Task I	Task II
20		12	7
21		10	9
22		10	4
23		8	6
24		20	8
25		18	5
26		3	+11
27		9	5
28		7	+9
29		19	8
30		17	8
		329	229
	Mean	11	8
	SD	4.29	3.38

As shown in Table 9, limited English writers produced a total of 329 sentences in their Task I (narration/ description) compositions compared with 229 sentences in Task II (comparison-contrast) for a difference of 30%. The mean number of sentences per composition in Task I was 11, while the mean number of sentences in Task II was 8. The standard deviations were 4.29 (Task I) and 3.38 (Task II), so that once again there is less variability around the mean in Task II papers than in Task I papers.

Another similarity in the two tables is that once more seven writers were able to produce more sentences in their Task II compositions than in Task I; not surprisingly, five of the writers were the same individuals as before. All seven compositions are identified by a plus sign next to the sentence total in the Task II column, and the two new compositions are also marked with an asterisk. My second hypothesis, therefore, about the greater number of sentences to be found in Task I than in Task II essays is supported by the data. The number of sentences, then, does appear to be affected by the topic of the compositions, and later in the study I will treat the theoretical implications of this discovery for the limited English writer.

Although the number of words and sentences appear to give some indication of writing proficiency, a better indicator is the T-unit which also tends to reveal maturity in writing.[9] Consequently, I scanned all the Task I and Task II compositions for the number of T-units. Once more I hypothesized that a greater number of T-units would be found in Task I than in Task II papers. I tabulated the findings and achieved the following results (Table 10):

Table 10

Total T-units by Student Number and Task

Student Number	Total T-units	
	Task I	Task II
1	7	5
2	3	# +4
3	5	+8
4	4	3
5	7	3
6	8	# +10
7	7	2
8	5	3
9	3	2
10	5	4
11	2	+3
12	6	+8
13	8	7
14	8	5
15	3	+4
16	5	1
17	4	2
18	3	+4
19	3	+5

Table 10 (continued)

Student Number		Total T-units	
		Task I	Task II
20		3	2
21		5	4
22		5	1
23		4	2
24		8	4
25		15	3
26		4	+9
27		4	2
28		9	9
29		1	1
30		8	7
		162	127
	Mean	5.4	4.2
	SD	2.76	2.55

Table 10 reveals that a total of 162 T-units were written in Task I compositions and that 127 T-units were written in Task II for a variance of twenty-two percent. When I calculated the mean for each column of T-units, I found that the figures were 5.4 for Task I and slightly smaller, 4.2, for Task II. The standard deviation for Tasks I and II were very similar, 2.76 and 2.55 respectively.

Out of the 30 limited English writers whose compositions I scrutinized for T-units, 21 writers (70%) wrote fewer T-units in their Task II compositions. Nine (30%) wrote more T-units in Task II, and their scores are once again indicated by the use of a plus sign in the Task II column. Only two of the nine had previously scored higher word and sentence counts for Task II, and they were consistent in using more T-units in Task II as well. Besides placing a plus sign by their score, I also marked it with a number sign (#) for easy identification.

Thus, my hypothesis that Task I compositions would display more T-units than Task II compositions is borne out by the data, but the data alone can not provide the reason for this disparity. Instead, I will deal with possible reasons for this phenomenon towards the end of this study in the light of recent theories of the sociology of language.

While I have been concerned in the first part of this chapter with a frequency count of words, sentences, and T-units, I will investigate in the second portion of this chapter some of the qualitative factors of composition, namely paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence, which make a piece of writing a unified whole. I will start with the concept of the paragraph, which is one of the components of the written product. In The Harper Handbook of College Composition, currently in use at U.T. El Paso as a required text in freshman English courses, the paragraph is described this way (Shaw, 1981):

> A paragraph is a group of sentences that seem to belong together. As a unit of thought, a paragraph can present a single, clear purpose that is more or less complete in itself, or it can serve as one of a series of sentence-bundles developing a larger thought. A paragraph is also a visual unit.

When I subjected the Task I and Task II compositions to a paragraph analysis, I used the following paragraph scoring guide developed by the Writing Assessment Committee as a feature of the checklist of English errors:

Table 11

Paragraph Scoring Guide

Score	Description
1	No paragraphs, no sections to paragraph
2	Paragraphs but no true sections
3	No paragraphs but true sections
4	A mixture of 2 and 3 poorly done
5	A mixture of 2 and 3 approximately done

The results that I obtained from the evaluation are as follows in Table 12:

Table 12

Results of Paragraph Scoring Guide by Percentage and Number

Score	Task I		Task II	
	%	#	%	#
1	30	9	27	8
2	30	9	37	11
3	10	3	6	2
4	20	6	27	8
5	10	3	3	1
	100	30	100	30

Table 12 shows that I rated the majority of the compositions in the two lower categories (1-2), 60% in Task I and 64% in Task II. In paragraphing, then, no clear differences between the two tasks emerge here. Regardless of the task, the students are having difficulty with paragraphing; therefore, I will present some of the compositions for a closer look at their attempts at paragraphing. Following are examples of both Task I and Task II compositions written by Spanish-speaking and monolingual English speaking limited English writers whose scores ranged from 1 to 5.

The first example is a Task I composition written by Student #7:

Score=1

> The quality that I would like for most people to know about me, is that I like to help people on their desires. The job that I have, which is more likely to sell memberships, is more enthusiastic to help the people or the members on their desire goals and accomplishments. By the way, the place where I work is a Health Club. This place gives me the facilities of meeting all kinds of people and know there

> interest point. One of the things that I like most, is giving Health information. I'am very glad that I'm a person that can motivate someone and illustrate the meaning of what I like to do. Afterall, I have had many experiences concerning my quality. One of them, is that I never, since I remember, talke to a physician concerning my Health. To my classmates, I recommend to follow my quality on helping achieve their goals and accomplishments on their Health.

This limited English writer would like his audience to know that his best quality is helping people, but then he digresses into explaining his job at a health club. By the end of his essay, he returns to his theme of helping people by advising his classmates to follow his example. Even though the beginning and the end of his essay are unified, the middle appears to be disjunctive as he moves from an explanation of where he works to the duties that he performs and his own health experiences.

Furthermore, one sentence in his essay seems to generate the other but without a clear purpose of where it is going, so that the entire essay is one paragraph with no sections. Also, he does not appear to have a clear

idea of a paragraph as a unit of thought or as a visual unit. As Mina Shaughnessy (1977) points out in her book on basic writers, Errors and Expectations, "The BW essay tends, as a result, to be made up of 'sentences of thought' rather than 'passages of thought,' and although the essays are not always short, they tend to be so because of the difficulty the writer has in staying with his point beyond its initial formulation."

Now, an illustration of a composition to which I assigned a score of "2" is this Task II essay in which student #3 attempts to compare and contrast two cigarette advertisements:

Score=2

These kinds of ads are realy trying to put you in there place, And they are trying to show you examples of people who smoke Cigarettes.

One of the ads show's a women, who just got done painting a picture. They are trying to show you the different types of people who all smoke the same brand of Cigarettes. The other type of person is some diver, who just came out of the water and is relaxing holding part of a sword.

What they are doing, Is trying to get the women, and men to smoke the same brand of Cigarettes. That why they get good looking women, and men to do the advertising.

Both of these ads, are trying to prove that they can get anybody to smoke there brand.

They are trying to show a sportsman, And a painter who both want to relax on the same brand.

The first part of this limited English writer's essay is set apart like a complete paragraph, but it is actually only one sentence. The second indentation is more successful as a paragraph, having three sentences and attempting to compare the two advertisements. The third indentation, however, should not have been set apart because it is still part of the preceding passage. Furthermore, there appears to be a concluding statement about the ads, but another sentence, which is not indented and is set apart by a space, is added on almost as an afterthought. Unlike the first writer who seemed to have little concept of paragraphing, this writer is grappling with the notion but his concept is visual rather than conceptual.

The author of the next example, student #11, is able to organize her units of thought mentally if not visually in her Task I composition. Even though there are no paragraphs as such, there are true sections:

Score=3

This past August I was chosen the employee of the month by my employer. The job I was given was not an easy job, but somehow I managed to do it. My job was to take inventory of the materials we have at the warehouse, I only had a month do do this. This job had never been done by one person especially a lady. I started taking down the roll number, serial number, and color of each and every material we have. It took me about three weeks to gather twenty four pages from back to front of information. Then, I was to type all the paper and hand them all in by this coming week. Typing the papers was not easy, I stayed after hours doing the typing. For a minute, I knew I would not finish because I had five paper to finish. It was friday morning and I had to tern in the papers by four o'clock. I quickly typed the five papers, then

> I rechecked all my work again. By 3:00 p.m. I handed the inventory report to my employer. He congratulated me and told me how a good job I had done and awarded me with a plack of the employee of the month.

In the first section, this limited English writer introduces her topic, which is being chosen employee of the month, and she explains that her job was to take inventory of materials in the warehouse. The second section begins with a description of her duties, continues with her method of cataloguing the materials, and ends with her description of the work involved in typing the information. By the third section, she builds up suspense in the words, "It was friday morning and I had to tern in the papers by four o'clock," and finally she is rewarded with a plaque for her dedication.

Even though she does not have a visual concept of the paragraph, she is able to proceed in stages or sections as she writes, and with some training she is sure to learn the appropriate form. Erika Lindemann (1982) comments on this situation in A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers:

> We don't begin with the parts, with paragraph-bricks, but with the whole, with ideas to express and a purpose for communicating them. We may set boundaries for the whole, deciding where we want our subject to begin and end, what we want to include and exclude, but in generating language to express the whole we choose to reveal it in a certain way. We discover its parts and pieces and their relationships to each other, shaping paragraphs to demonstrate those relationships. We don't begin with form, pouring content into paragraph molds; rather, we begin with content, and in the act of drafting discover form.

The following limited English writer, student #16, has grasped the idea of form in paragraphing, but the piece is almost devoid of content. Only the minimum requirements for a comparison-contrast essay are met, an introduction and two brief paragraphs of explanation:

Score=4

In both ads the advertisers seem to come up with basically the same types of ads.

In the ad with the women the success part of the ad is a little easier for most people to strive for. The most people who would go for this ad would be other women or guys who want the Vantage success.

In the ad with the man the success part is fairly developed. Letting everyone understand that this man is really getting his Vantage success.

The limited English writer who composed the preceding essay has a fair understanding of sectioning and paragraphing, but the piece is not successful because of a lack of elaboration. In the first sentence the writer merely states her premise that the advertisements are "basically the same types of ads" in a single sentence without any more explanation. The other two paragraphs are attempts to prove her point by mentioning "the success part" of both ads, but she fails to say what the successful part of the ads really is.

In my last example, the writer, student #14, appears to handle the elements of paragraphing and sectioning well in Task I:

Score=5

I feel that I have many good qualities just like everybody that is around me. But there is one that I think I due better than all other. That quality is being a leader. I have had experience as a leader in high school. I have had the responsibility of commanding a group of students just like me and be abl to get them going on the right track.

Well to start off I will start by giving you a small bit of my past. And by this small amount I hope to show you how I came to haveing this quality. I hope that can make this quality work with me in my comeing life.

As a junior in Canutillo High school, I was given the position as drill team commander for the boys. At that time there was only about 18 cadets in the class. I had to not only get them to become good drilling cadet, but most important was to become better humanbeings. It

was not an easy task because they were students just like me. They believe that why should they listen to me if I was just like them. What right did I have to tell them what to do. It was a never ending battle on that point of view. I had to be careful not to miss treat no one and give every one an equal opportunity. But we all so had to make a name for our school.

As a senor I was incharge of about 155 cadets plus the drill team. At the end of my senor year we had done something that we were proud of. We had become proud of our school, ourself and our team OH! and most importon of the six trophys we had won.

I know I don't know everything about being a true leader but I am welling to make a special effort to learn. As for how other people feel about me as a leader that is their option. But my only hope would be to be given the chance to prove to the other people and to myself that I am capable of doing it. I am not afraid at jumping to the chance or opportunity.

This limited English writer has written an introductory paragraph, three paragraphs in the body of his composition, and a concluding paragraph, so that the form is appropriate to the length of his piece and the content is also elaborated with specific details that exemplify his quality of being a good leader. The form of his composition was dictated by the content and not the reverse, which shows his control of paragraphing.

A question that surfaced when I scored the previous compositions was whether or not the fact that Task I was a descriptive/narrative assignment and Task II a comparison-contrast one appear to be responsible for the students' paragraphing skills. I, therefore, assembled a table of Task I and Task II paragraphing scores by individual writers so that the answer might be revealed (Table 13):

Table 13

Paragraphing Scores by Student Number and Task

Student Number	Task I	Task II
1	2	2
2	2	2
3	1	+2
4	4	4
5	5	4
6	2	+5
7	1	1
8	1	+2
9	1	1
10	1	+4
11	3	1
12	3	3
13	4	1
14	5	4
15	1	+3
16	2	+4
17	1	1
18	2	2
19	4	2
20	4	4
21	2	2

Table 13 (continued)

Student Number	Task I	Task II
22	5	1
23	1	+4
24	4	2
25	1	+4
26	2	1
27	2	2
28	2	2
29	2	1
30	4	2

From the data in Table 13, it would appear that the different discourse aims of Task I and Task II did not influence the outcome of the scores significantly. Twelve students (40%) received the same score for both tasks, eight students (27%) actually increased their scores in Task II, and ten students (33%) had decreasing scores. If discourse aim is not contributing to their difficulty with paragraphing, then another causative variable must be found.

At this point, my next consideration in the qualitative analysis of the compositions by limited English writers is the dual properties of cohesion and coherence. The definition that I used for cohesion in this study is from Writing Achievement, 1969-1979: Results from the Third National Writing Assessment (1980), "The term cohesion refers in general to the many ways words and ideas are linked together in writing to create a sense of wholeness and coherence."[10] These ways are known as cohesive ties and take different forms--lexical renaming, conjunction, reference, substitution, ellipsis, rhythm, repetition, story frames, retrospection, and summing up. As for coherence, it is the sum total of all the cohesive strategies the writer has used and is commonly known as "making sense."

In my assessment of Task I and Task II papers for cohesion and coherence, I thus availed myself of the following scoring guide found in Writing Achievement, 1969-1979 and adapted by the Writing Assessment Committee for use in the checklist of English errors:[11]

Table 14

Cohesion Scoring Guide Categories

Score	Description
1	Little or no evidence of cohesion: clauses and sentences are not connected beyond pairing.
2	Attempts at cohesion: evidence of gathering details but little or no evidence that these details are meaningfully ordered. Very little would seem lost if the details were rearranged.
3	Cohesion: details are both gathered and ordered. Cohesion does not necessarily lead to coherence, to the successful binding of parts so that the sense of the whole discourse is greater than the sum of its parts. In pieces of writing that are cohesive rather than coherent, there are large sections of details that cohere but these sections stand apart as sections.
4	Coherence: while there may be a sense of sections within the piece of writing, the sheer number and variety of cohesion strategies bind the details and sections into a wholeness. This sense of wholeness can be achieved by a saturation of syntactic repetition throughout the piece and/or by closure that retrospectively orders the entire piece and/or by general statements that organize the whole process.

After I evaluated all the compositions according to the cohesion scoring guide, I found that the results yielded the following data (Table 15):

Table 15

Cohesion Scores by Student Number and Task

Student Number	Task I	Task II
1	2	+3
2	1	+2
3	1	+2
4	2	2
5	2	2
6	2	+3
7	1	1
8	2	1
9	2	2
10	2	2
11	2	1
12	3	3
13	2	1
14	2	2
15	1	1
16	2	2
17	2	2
18	2	2
19	2	1
20	1	2
21	2	2

Table 15 (continued)

Student Number	Task I	Task II
22	2	1
23	2	2
24	2	2
25	2	2
26	1	+2
27	1	1
28	3	2
29	2	1
30	2	2

Table 15 shows that 17 students (57%) received the same score in Tasks I and II, eight students (27%) received a lesser score in Task II, and five students (16%) actually received a higher score in Task II. More importantly, Table 15 shows that no student received a score higher than "3" in cohesion, which would indicate that one of the stumbling blocks to effective writing for limited English writers is the establishment of cohesive ties in their compositions. It is evident, then, that more work needs to be done in this area if the majority of limited English writers are to improve their composition skills.

When I present the same data in Table 15 another way, I can also draw other conclusions:

Table 16

Results of Cohesion Scoring Guide by Percentage and Number

Score	Task I		Task II	
	%	#	%	#
1	23	7	30	9
2	70	21	60	18
3	7	2	10	3
	100	30	100	30

In Table 16, it is clear that the majority of the compositions, 70% in Task I and 60% in Task II, showed some attempts at cohesion; 23% in Task I and 30% in Task II showed little or no evidence of cohesion; and 7% in Task I and 10% in Task II displayed some cohesion but were not coherent. Once again the results showed that the discourse aims of the tasks did not seem to affect their scores significantly.

While I examined some of the compositions more closely for cohesion in categories 1 to 3, I found that they provided conclusive evidence about the insufficient use of cohesive ties. As it happened, the compositions that were selected as examples of the three categories were written by Spanish-speaking students. This does not imply that monolingual English speakers and Black English speakers did not exhibit the same problems in their compositions, as a comparison of the language group to which the students belong (in Table 1) and their cohesion scores (in Table 15) can demonstrate.

The first example is a Task II paper comparing and contrasting two cigarette advertisements. It was written by student #27:

Score=1

The advirtsers are trying to sell the product to cigarettes smokers through these 2 persons:

The lady has a look that tries to attract what is she looking at or thinking about. Through her look, we can say that smoking a cigarette makes one to think.

And smoking a cigarette makes one to distract from problems, or have fun as the guy in the second picture. Go to picnic or go fishing requires to smoke for entertainment.

Here the limited English writer shows a little evidence of cohesion in the use of conjunctions and the repetition of words and phrases--"2 persons," "the lady," "through her look," and "the guy"--but the sentences appear only to be strung together without regard to how they should relate to one another.

In contrast, another writer, student #10, shows some attempts at cohesion in trying to describe his best quality, which is being on the defensive:

Score=2

When I stop to think about it, my best quality would simply probally be that I am usually on the look out for actions taken against me. I am usually on the look out for others who are tring to do things to me. One good example of my quality would probally be at McDonald's, I have been promoted to the position of a Crew Chief, on my first day as Crew Chief I noticed that a Crew member, Letty, was testing me to see whether she could have the new Crew Chief under her control. I simply handeled the problem by taking a rather firm action against her, I sent her to clean the lobby and rest-rooms. I am a ambitious person, and I believe if a person has a chance of moving up in this world that person should simply go for it. I conclude that my best quality is to be a successful person.

In the composition above, the limited English writer begins his essay by stating his best quality and exemplifies it with an incident at work. He employs the cohesive technique of lexical renaming when he repeats the word

quality three times in his composition, but at the conclusion he has shifted from writing about his quality to telling the reader about his ambition. His attempt at cohesion falls apart because there is no real unifying structure to his paper.

In my last example, written by student #1, there is more evidence of cohesion.

Score=3

> Advertizers have a reason for everything they put in an ad. In the ads shown to us, we have two examples of the same ad trying to appeal two different types of market.
>
> The first ad tries to appeal the independant, but intelectual woman who wants to accomplish something by herself. Her facial features represent, or give an impression of a thinker, her body possition, relaxed supported on her elbows. Paint brushes on the side and dirty clouthing gives the impresion that was working.
>
> The last part and most important the cigarette. The words "Remember", "Change of life", "You're tasting success", "Sure tastes

good", imply or better yet, have a dobble meaning in this ad. For they refer to Vantage cigarettes and at the same time being successful.

Ad number two appeals to the macho adventurous look. The background which gives the illusion of adventure, showing the rugged sea and mountains. Sitting on the deck looking at his success the man shows a smile but with out forgetting that in his right hand he show a lighted cigarette.

The superior look, macho look, action man, adventurous, triumphant, in contrast with intelectual this ad is tricky but nice.

This limited English writer uses lexical cohesive ties such as "two examples of the same ad," "the first ad," and "ad number two," as he tries to gather and order his ideas and details, and there is also some attempt to bind the essay into a unified whole as he leads the reader logically from one point to another.

Thus, I have shown in this chapter that the quantitative feature of discourse--words, sentences, and T-units--appear to be affected by the aim of discourse. In the

qualitative features--paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence--the aim of discourse also appears to have an effect although less significantly. Whatever the task, limited English students exhibit problems with the texture of their compositions. It remains to be investigated, however, whether Spanish syntactical and rhetorical patterns interfered in the compositions of those limited English writers who are Spanish-speaking. As the evidence stands in this chapter, it appears as though limited English writers, many of whom are Spanish-speaking, simply have not learned as yet the organizational aspects of standard written English.

Chapter Three

THE READING FACTOR

To begin my investigation into the reading factor in the writing competency of limited English writers, I will briefly review the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, which was administered as part of the reading and writing assessment project. Subsequently, I will present the results that the subjects obtained on this measure of reading ability. After presenting this preliminary information, I will include the case studies of a few representative limited English writers to see whether their background in reading and writing provide any clues about their poor performance in freshman composition courses.

Although it may have its detractors, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test has withstood the test of time as a valid and reliable instrument since its introduction in 1929. Using and pre and a post test format, it has been standardized, correlated with ACT scores, widely used by high schools and colleges, and accepted over the years. Its purpose, according to the Examiner's Manual (1981), is "to provide a trustworthy ranking of student ability in

three areas of academic achievement: reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and reading rate."

While three skills are measured, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test is actually divided into two parts, vocabulary and reading comprehension with the reading rate included as a part of the reading comprehension portion. For purposes of this study, I will only be considering vocabulary and reading comprehension. The first section, vocabulary, contains 100 words which have five distractors each. The stimuli in this part are not isolated words; instead, they are placed in a "minimal context" to facilitate understanding. A sample item from the practice exercise portion of the test booklet is as follows:

A <u>linguist</u> is trained in 1. art 2. law
3. language 4. writing 5. history

The vocabulary has not been selected at random but has been chosen from reading materials such as textbooks and journals used in high school and college. Half of the vocabulary items are words that contain a prefix (Example: illogical), and the other half are non-prefixed (Example: surge). The time allotted for this part of the test is 15 minutes.

The comprehension portion contains eight reading passages with a total of 36 multiple choice questions followed by five distractors each. The first passage is comprised of approximately 600 words (the longest section in this part) for the purpose of determining the reading rate. Eight questions follow this passage. The remaining seven passages, however, consist of 150 to 200 words and are followed by four questions. An attempt has also been made to balance this section by including 18 factual questions (Example: Swinburne's hair was what color?) and 18 inferential ones (Example: What is the writer's attitude toward . . . ?). The topics of the passages range from literature, economics, and art history to politics, science and architecture. The time allotted for this section is 20 minutes, which includes one minute for the calculation of the reading rate.

Scoring the test is relatively simple. Students are instructed to answer all questions, and a raw score is obtained from the number of correct responses. This raw score is then converted into several derived scores--percentile ranks, stanines, standard scores, and grade equivalents. In this study, I will only be concerned with grade equivalency, which refers to the students' standing in relation to grade level (national norms).

Tables 17 to 19 present the vocabulary, reading comprehension, and total grade equivalents for the 20 out of the 30 subjects who were present on the day the Nelson-Denny Reading test was administered:

Table 17

Vocabulary Grade Equivalents on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test

Student Number	Vocabulary G.E. Form E
1	10.9
2	
3	
4	13.5
5	
6	10.1
7	9.4
8	
9	9.9
10	10.1
11	6.5
12	7.4
13	
14	6.2
15	6.8
16	11.1
17	
18	14.0
19	5.9

Table 17 (continued)

Student Number		Vocabulary G.E. Form E
20		5.6
21		8.5
22		
23		6.5
24		
25		8.8
26		10.4
27		7.1
28		7.1
29		
30		
	Mean	8.8
	SD	2.41

Table 18

Comprehension Grade Equivalents on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test

Student Number	Comprehension G.E. Form E
1	6.0
2	
3	
4	11.2
5	
6	9.4
7	5.5
8	
9	7.9
10	7.3
11	7.9
12	7.3
13	
14	5.5
15	3.8
16	11.2
17	
18	10.7
19	8.6

Table 18 (continued)

Student Number		Comprehension G.E.
		Form E
20		6.0
21		7.3
22		
23		3.8
24		
25		6.7
26		10.1
27		6.7
28		6.7
29		
30		
	Mean	7.5
	SD	2.14

Table 19

Total Grade Equivalents on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test

Student Number	Total G.E. (Voc. & Comp.) Form E
1	8.8
2	
3	
4	12.8
5	
6	9.9
7	7.5
8	
9	9.2
10	9.0
11	7.2
12	7.4
13	
14	5.4
15	3.7
16	11.2
17	
18	12.9
19	7.2

Table 19 (continued)

Student Number	Total G.E. (Voc. & Comp.) Form E
20	5.4
21	7.9
22	
23	4.4
24	
25	7.8
26	10.3
27	6.8
28	6.8
29	
30	
Mean	8.1
SD	2.44

Table 17 shows the results of the vocabulary portion of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Form E. The grade equivalences range from 5.6 (fifth grade, sixth month) to 14.0 (college sophomore). With such a wide variance, the mean equivalent is 8.8 (eighth grade, eighth month) and the standard deviation is 2.41. In Table 18 (comprehension), the variance is even wider, ranging from 3.8 to 11.2. The mean grade equivalent for comprehension is 7.5, which is lower by 1.3 than the grade equivalent for vocabulary. The standard deviation, however, is similar to that in the vocabulary portion at 2.14. When the vocabulary and comprehension scores were combined in Table 19, the total equivalences spanned nine grades, from 3.7 to 12.8 for a mean of 8.1. The standard deviation was almost constant at 2.44.

The data show that limited English writers are reading, on an average, at an eighth grade level, which may be affecting their writing ability. That is, the fact that they exhibit low grade equivalences in vocabulary and reading comprehension may be responsible for their poor performance in Task I and Task II. If the limited English writers could not understand the instructions as specified in the two prompts, they naturally would have difficulty

in trying to meet the rhetorical demands of the writing tasks.

When I checked the language background of the examinees, I found that twelve (60%) students were Spanish speakers, six (30%) were monolingual English speakers, and two (10%) were Black English speakers. The monolingual English speakers achieved the highest scores overall on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, and the Spanish speakers scored higher in vocabulary (due perhaps to the presence of cognates) than in comprehension, but the sample of Black English speakers is too small to permit generalizations.

Once I had considered the written production of limited English students in previous chapters and their reading ability in the present chapter, I felt that it was of equal importance to consider the students themselves; therefore, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to several case studies. My reason for including case studies is to gain another perspective about limited English students' problems with reading and writing.

Often an error analysis of the compositions can describe the way students fail to write an effective paper, and a discourse analysis can also indicate how they fail to achieve the aim of the writing task, but these

analyses cannot explain why they have not learned to communicate well in writing. Thus, while I could uncover the local reasons for their inability to write well, I could not discern the global reasons for their difficulty with reading and writing from their compositions or the Nelson-Denny Reading Test alone.

In this investigation, then, I present interviews with some limited English writers in order to gain an insight into other factors--personal, sociolinguistic, and attitudinal--that might affect their reading and writing. Because the majority of limited English writers in the study are Spanish-surnamed, I will spotlight six Spanish-speaking students who are enrolled in their first semester of freshman English. My method of gathering information was accomplished by means of a personal interview, the sociolinguistic questionnaire, and a reading survey.[12] Because of the personal nature of much of the information, I have used a pseudonym for each student in order to protect his or her identity.

*****

Alfonso R., 18 years old, was born in Eagle Pass, Texas, to Mexican parents. The family lived across the border in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, until three years ago when they emigrated to the United States.

Having completed elementary and junior high school in Piedras Negras, Alfonso was ready to enroll in high school in Eagle Pass, when his plans were thwarted by the high school counselor who informed him that due to insufficient credits and a lack of English he would have to begin at the junior high level in the local school system. Not wishing to be demoted, Alfonso commuted by bicycle to Piedras Negras for three years until he graduated from high school in Mexico. While he was finishing his senior year in Piedras Negras, he was also attending night classes in Eagle Pass in order to prepare for the GED exam. Once he passed the exam, he applied for admission to U.T. El Paso and was admitted as a provisional student.

Alfonso had studied English in Piedras Negras, but the class was almost entirely devoted to grammar. To gain some proficiency, he attended English language movies and practiced English when shopping in Eagle Pass. At home and with friends, he spoke Spanish exclusively, and though he has the ability of an educated native in Spanish, in English he has an elementary speaking ability and an intermediate capacity in understanding, reading, and writing. On campus he speaks English with his professors, including bilingual ones, but he tends to associate with

students from his hometown and speaks only Spanish with them.

When I questioned him about his reading habits, Alfonso admitted that he had never read a book in English but that he sometimes read a newspaper for the funnies and sales ads. If he were given a choice of books to read, he would select books on electronics or on high fidelity sound as his first choice and then in order of preference: plays, mysteries, religious articles or books, short stories, newspaper articles on current news and sports, essays, society news, and science fiction materials. The reading matter that he claimed to dislike is novels, biographies or autobiographies, poetry and romance novels. In his first semester of freshman English, he attempted to read Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe because he felt he should read an American classic, but the language of the book proved too difficult for him and he abandoned the book to try Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea and Steinbeck's The Pearl with simpler language. When measured by the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, he scored at a seventh grade reading level (7.9).

During the course of the personal interview, I also learned that the basic composition course in which Alfonso was enrolled was the first writing class in English that

he had ever taken. His initial compositions in the class were not only marked by misspellings, word choice errors, sentence fragments, usage problems, and errors in tense, but they displayed a total lack of organization and form. His written sentences seemed childlike in their simplicity, and the content of his compositions was meager. Once he was instructed on the proper use of form, he quickly adapted to the conventions of English writing. T help himself with the organization of his papers, he would make an outline for each writing assignment even though it was not a requirement of the course. To help with spelling and definitions, he used a bilingual dictionary.

As the semester progressed, Alfonso's writing improved in form and content. Since his career goal is to be an electrical engineer, his topics for compositions often reflected his scientific interests. Try as he might, however, he still had a great deal of difficulty with sentence fragments and run-on sentences at the end of the semester. When I asked him what he thought he needed to become a better writer, he replied that he felt he needed to expand his vocabulary, to learn how English sentences are formed, and to be forced "to think in English." He also felt that the exercises in sentence combining had been helpful in "learning to handle the

structures but not in learning the structures themselves." Another help to him in the semester had been the daily writing of summaries based on readings in class because this practice had forced him to gather his thoughts in English.

Despite his intelligence, his dedication, and his eagerness, he did not pass his first semester of English composition. After this failure, he seemed to think that he should have taken ESOL courses in order to learn about English structure "from the beginning" although he had been opposed to the idea at the start of the semester when it was suggested by his adviser.

*****

Patricia D. was born in Juarez, Mexico, 19 years ago and attended elementary and junior high school in her native city. Her parents, a skilled laborer and a housewife, moved to El Paso three years ago and enrolled their children in the local public school system. Patricia attended Ysleta High School where she had difficulty adjusting to her new environment. In the personal interview, she admitted that she had not wanted to leave her school friends behind in Mexico and that she resented the family's move to the United States. At Ysleta High School she continued to speak Spanish to her classmates

and only spoke English when it was required in class or in conference with teachers. For her the high school experience was torturous because she did not like the school, she could not understand her teachers very well, and she felt that at sixteen she was "too old to learn another language." She felt that she had been able to get by in her classes because she was rarely called upon, and she had a quick memory which served her well on tests which were largely discrete point ("objective").[13]

During her senior year, she was required to write paragraphs and book reviews in English for the first time. She could recall two books that she had read, I Never Promised You a Rose Garden by Hanna Green and the play Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare, and she expressed a preference for mystery novels and books "about the world." She also indicated in the interview that she enjoyed reading Cosmopolitan and Vogue magazines and Mad comic book. Also, she often liked to read a newspaper, especially the society pages and art, theater, and movie reviews. When she took the Nelson-Denny Reading Test however, she obtained a grade equivalency of only 7.8.

Now that she is enrolled in a freshman level English course, she is experiencing difficulty in expressing herself in writing. When composing, she writes down her

thoughts in Spanish first and then "rethinks it in English" when she is revising the assignment. She uses a bilingual dictionary sparingly, preferring to "just come up with the word." As a result, her papers have numerous errors in word choice, lexical differentiation of prepositions, subject-verb agreement, pronoun agreement plus run-on sentences and fragments. Despite these obstacles to effective communication, her writing displays maturity of thought and originality of ideas.

When I questioned her about her problems in writing, she replied that part of her difficulty stemmed from the fact that in Spanish, "You need more words to express your ideas, and in English you need less." To be a better writer in English, she felt that she needed to learn more vocabulary and more about English structure especially "the subject and verb position in an English sentence." If she can pass her college courses, Patricia would like to get off provisional status, receive a bachelor's degree, and go on to graduate school to become a psychologist. At this point, she is considering taking ESOL courses before attempting writing courses in the regular English curriculum again because of her halting oral ability and poor writing ability in English. She expressed her determination, however, to achieve her goals

in life and feels that her only impediment at present is her "bad English."

*****

Fernie M. has lived in the United States for nine years and is 19 years old. Born in Mexico, he started going to elementary school in his native country but later attended elementary and junior high school in California. A few years ago, his family moved to El Paso where he enrolled at Coronado High School. After graduation, he applied for admission to U.T. El Paso and was admitted as a provisional student. Since his father is unemployed, Fernie works part-time to meet his college costs. He is also the recipient of a federal grant which helps with his expenses. When he receives his degree, he hopes to work as a physical education teacher.

His family consists of his father, who is a skilled laborer when he can find work, his mother, who is a housewife, three brothers and two sisters. His parents speak Spanish to each other and to the children, and the children speak Spanish to the parents, but among themselves the children speak both Spanish and English. At school, Fernie speaks Spanish to his close friends and English to his classmates and teachers. When I asked him how he felt about being bilingual and bicultural, he said

that he did not feel any conflict between American and Mexican ways.

While in elementary school, Fernie enjoyed reading but by junior high school he was not doing well because he "couldn't concentrate." In high school he could remember reading two books, whose titles he could not recall, for a rapid reading course, and he also read a novel "about Indians" for a literature class. Currently he is taking a basic English course at U.T. El Paso that meets six hours a week and that emphasizes both reading and writing. In a reading survey, Fernie could only recall the title of one book, The Chosen by Chaim Potok, that he had read recently, but he could name four television shows--"Love Connection," "The Gong Show," "People's Court," and "Good Times"--and three news programs--Cable News Network, News 26 (Spanish), and Channel 4 News--that he watches regularly. He feels that books in general are boring, and if he had a choice he would read joke books. He dislikes reading magazines and comic books, but sometimes he reads a newspaper for news stories, movie reviews, and the classified ads for jobs. When he took the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, he received a grade equivalent of 9.2.

Prior to his college writing class, Fernie had some writing experience in high school where he had to write a

summary every day based on what the class had read. Other than that writing exercise, the class had been devoted to grammar. Now he is learning the process of composition--notetaking, writing, revising, editing--for the first time. His particular method of writing usually consists of "writing down what comes to mind" and then "fixing it" (editing). He feels that he does not need a dictionary when he writes because he is able to think in English. He believes that his problems are due to carelessness, spending only a half hour on writing assignments, and not concentrating, or as he puts it, "wasting a lot of time."

In order to become a better writer, Fernie admitted in the interview that he needs to improve his study habits and to learn to express himself well. When I asked him to elaborate, he replied that often he could not put down the "right words" on paper so that the teacher knew what he meant to say. He then gave an example of his difficulty by telling me about a stereo that he had bought "for the use of the house." He said that what he meant was that the other members of his family could use the stereo, but that he was the sole owner. After a short pause, he asked, "Do you understand? I know what I am thinking, but I can't put it into words." Despite his lack of confidence in expressing himself in English, he does not

think that it is due to Spanish but rather to "being somewhere in between Spanish and English."

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Cynthia M. is a 19 year-old native El Pasoan who graduated from local elementary, junior high, and high schools. Both of her parents are originally from Mexico, and their occupations are skilled laborer (presently unemployed due to a layoff) and housewife. The rest of her family consists of two brothers and four sisters. At home all of the family members speak Spanish to each other, but at school Cynthia speaks to her friends partly in Spanish and in English. Although she feels that it is advantageous to know both languages, she plans to speak only English to any children she may have in the future.

For entertainment Cynthia enjoys watching Spanish as well as English programs on television, but her reading is exclusively in English. Her favorite magazine is Seventeen which she reads regularly. When she reads a newspaper it is mainly for news stories, and in books she prefers non-fiction to fiction, but she could not remember the title of any book she had read. On the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, she was placed as reading on the seventh grade level (7.2).

Her educational plans are to remove her provisional status and to receive a bachelor's and master's degree in business. After graduation, she would like to work in the accounting department of an office and command a "top salary." Currently she has a part-time position as a clerk and is paying half of her college costs herself. The rest of her financial assistance comes from a federal grant. This semester she is taking a basic English course in which reading and writing are emphasized. Her previous writing experiences include keeping a journal in junior high school and writing paragraphs and summaries in her English class at Riverside High School.

In her personal interview she expressed the feeling that her writing problems stem from "thinking too fast" when she is composing. She explained that she tended to do her writing assignments at the last minute after working hours, and when she rushed she was not able to express what she meant. Her written production is imaginative, but it is filled with grammatical and structural errors as she stretches for more complex syntax. For example, she wrote the following sentences in a review of The Time Machine by H. G. Wells:

> At last it was opened and in it they found a man in which he was a psychologist.

and

> This book has an interesting story in which persons who like to talk about things of the Earth would really like this play.

Furthermore, she attributed her difficulty in writing to her shyness in writing down her thoughts and feelings. She felt that in order to progress she had to learn new words and to learn how to express her emotions. She disclosed that she rarely used a dictionary except when she "didn't understand forms." Finally, she thought that the more relaxed she was and the more encouragement she received, the better she would perform in her composition class.

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Victor S., 18 years old, was born in Mexico City and now resides in Juarez where he lives with his parents and two brothers. For the last six years, he has been studying in El Paso private and public schools. He was first enrolled in a parochial school where he was ridiculed by classmates for his lack of English. In his own words, he "was traumatized" about speaking English after one such incident. When he was a sophomore at a private high school, he was expelled for playing hooky and other discipline problems; therefore, he finished his studies at El Paso High School.

Since his father owns a shop in Juarez, Victor hopes to study business in college and go into the family business. At the present time, however, he does not work with his father and is just expected to go to school. All of his college costs are being paid for by his family, and if he does well this year he may even be allowed to study at an out-of-town university, which is one of his greatest desires.

Victor prefers to watch television, see movies, and read newspapers and magazines in English. His favorite periodicals are the El Paso Times (sports section) and Sports Illustrated. Books are another matter. In an essay about his reading and writing experiences, he wrote, "I've never read any books, because it took me too long to read them, and I got too bored." If he did read one, he would choose a science fiction book or a book on mythology. Part of his dislike of books goes back to his traumatic experiences in elementary school where, as he explained, "Teachers used to pick on me to read out loud in class, and all the students critized me about my reading, and from then on I've never liked reading or the subject." When Victor took the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, he received a grade equivalent of 9.0.

In all his daily transactions, he uses Spanish and reserves English for the school setting. Because of his length of study in the United States, he is fluent and articulate in English, but he feels he does not speak "proper English" and finds himself translating mentally from "proper Spanish." When he is writing, Victor admits that he also thinks in Spanish and then translates into English. He never uses a dictionary and prefers to ask his friends or his teacher for help. His writing experience in high school consisted of writing five to six essays, and up to his freshman year at U.T. El Paso he had never used a rough draft when composing. He feels that his weaknesses lie in the areas of vocabulary and usage, and he also blames his low grades in writing on poor study habits.

Throughout the interview, Victor kept stressing the fact that it had been his idea and not his parents' idea to study in the United States because a number of his friends and relatives were studying here too. At the same time, he kept reiterating his dislike of school and schoolwork and added that he felt frustrated in class. When I asked why he still stayed in school if he had those strong feelings, he replied that he did realize the

importance of a college degree and that it seemed "the thing to do."

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Yolanda P. has lived in El Paso for eight years and is 19 years old. She was born in El Paso, but her parents were residents of Juarez, Mexico, at that time. When she was 11 years old, she and her family, consisting of her parents, three brothers, and three sisters, moved permanently to El Paso. At home the children speak Spanish to their parents, but among themselves they alternate between English and Spanish. Her parents place a great deal of emphasis on a good education since her mother is college-educated and her father has a high school diploma. Yolanda's ambition is to be a professional, but she is undecided about which career to choose. Since her parents own a restaurant, she is able to work there part-time and earn money to pay for part of her college costs. The rest of her financial assistance comes from a federal grant. At work she uses English more often than Spanish, and when she shops at the local malls she also prefers to speak English.

On the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, Yolanda ranked on a ninth grade reading level (9.2). She does not like to read, however, in either English or Spanish, claiming that

she "gets a headache" whenever she tries to read books. The only book that she ever enjoyed reading was The Godfather by Mario Puzo because of the action in the story. In her opinion, the book was better than the movie because she "imagined the characters better." The only other book she could recall reading was The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck. When she reads a newspaper, which is seldom, she likes news articles and fashion stories, and she does not particularly like magazines. In the electronic media, she chooses English language programs over Spanish programs. She could easily name her favorite shows on television: "Family Ties," "Cheers," "Three's Company," "Happy Days," "TV's Bloopers," "Night Court," "Hill Street Blues," and "As the World Turns." The news programs she sees regularly are the six o'clock news and "60 Minutes."

In the interview, Yolanda revealed that she had taken special English classes at Burges High School. By her senior year, she was able to enroll in a regular sophomore English class where she was required to write several compositions and a research paper. Now that she is in college, she is able to think in English when she writes, but she still uses a bilingual dictionary at times. What she enjoys writing are notes or letters to friends from

out-of-town. She dislikes other forms of writing mainly because of "my spelling." She added that, "Sometimes I enjoy reading and writing but not that much." In order to improve her writing, she feels that she needs to think about what she is going to say before she begins, thereby avoiding a tendency to "beat around the bush."

Also, she believes that, "You have to want to learn how to write in order to improve," and that, "It is important to know the meanings of words and the structures of an English sentence." Although there are mistakes in spelling, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments, her written production reflects a good command of English in general. In spite of her past attitude and difficulties, she showed a willingness to learn how to write well in her first college English class.

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In summary, I have presented in this chapter the vocabulary, reading comprehension, and total scores that limited English writers received on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. In addition, I presented case studies of limited English writers so that their attitudes regarding reading and writing may begin to be explored as possible correlates with their reading and writing ability. At the same time, I was able to uncover some data that had not

been retrieveable from the students' compositions alone: for example, many limited English writers are from a low socioeconomic level; some speak Spanish at home; some use English at school primarily; and the majority dislike reading and writing.

Chapter Four

INTERPRETATION

The presence of limited English writers in freshman composition courses at U.T. El Paso has been a problem for faculty and administration alike for some time. While they were graduates of local high schools or recipients of a GED diploma and thus eligible to enter the University under an open admissions policy, limited English writers nevertheless exhibited certain characteristics in their compositions which demonstrated that they were unprepared for college level work. In the 1983 writing assessment of incoming freshman students, the papers of limited English writers ranked in the two lowest categories when judged by holistic and primary trait scoring techniques.

The limited English writers' failure to meet the rhetorical demands of the two writing tasks was due both to local and global reasons. Locally, the most salient characteristics in the papers were mechanical and syntactical errors and organizational difficulties. Besides these surface features, there were global factors which were revealed by the students' scores on a standardized test of reading and by information gained through a

personal interview. The results of the reading test showed that they were functioning at the eighth grade level in reading, and the interviews revealed that some had a poor attitude towards reading, writing, and schoolwork in general.

In comparing the performance of the subsample with that of the total sample in the distribution of ratings, I observed basic differences. For example, the students in the total sample received better scores according to primary trait scoring on Task II, but the students in the subsample received better scores on Task I according to the same criterion. Also, in reading the Writing Assessment Committee's report I learned that the quality of the papers in the total sample increased with the quantity (length), whereas I had seen in my investigation that the quality decreased with the quantity for the papers in the subsample.[14]

These differences of length and quality across tasks begged for a better explanation than the mere assumption that Task I was the "easier" assignment and Task II the "harder" assignment for the students in the subsample. I thus turned to three current theories of the sociology of language for a clearer understanding of the theoretical issues involved. I felt that each one had something to

contribute to the knowledge of the cognitive and linguistic demands placed on the limited English writers by each task.

My starting point in formulating a theoretical explanation for the performance of the students in the subsample on the writing tasks is the theory of the sociology of knowledge posited by Peter Berger and Thomas Luchmann (1966). According to their hypothesis, "all human 'knowledge' is developed, transmitted, and maintained in social situations." This social construct of reality includes both "subjective" and "objective" reality, and the medium through which this is accomplished is language. The language of everyday life, which is built out of personal experience, provides us with a cognitive structure, and this framework is the basis for all other knowledge.

In applying this theory to the writing ability of limited English writers, I could see why the totals differed for the quantitative aspects (words, sentences, and T-units) of Task I and Task II. Task I was concerned with a unique quality in the writer, a topic that was grounded in the writers' own experience. When the students in the subsample wrote about being a helpful health club employee, a diligent inventory clerk, a

capable drill team leader, or a defensive crew chief, they were relating something that was part of their subjective world, even though a character trait is an abstraction of a fairly high level. However, they could objectify that world through language because they had "lived" it. In other words, that experience gave them the cognitive structure and the linguistic repertoire from which to draw in their use of words, sentences, and T-units.

When the subgroup attempted Task II, a comparison-contrast essay, they were writing about something outside their own experience, outside their realm of knowledge, and therefore they "came up short" linguistically by producing fewer words, sentences, and T-units. Judging from the results of the frequency counts and other measures, I assumed that most of the students in the subsample had never been asked before to write a comparison-contrast assignment. In their everyday experience, they probably had never written an analytic topic-as-objective-reality, and so they were at a loss for ideas and the words with which to formulate those ideas. To be able to analyze successfully, the students had to move from a concrete to an abstract level, to hypothesize about similarities and differences, and to arrive at conclusions. Without sufficient experience in these

cognitive operations, the subgroup found it extremely difficult to complete Task II effectively.

Berger and Luchmann's theory, furthermore, explains directly why in the qualitative aspects (paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence) the subgroup had difficulties in Task I and Task II regardless of discourse aims. Paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence are elements of style that are not inherent in a writer but must be discovered in the very act of writing. Since the subgroup lacked practical experience in writing, they were only able to handle the elements of style at a minimal level.

In speaking of the linguistic competence of limited English writers, another possible reason for differences across tasks might be found in the ideas of Basil Bernstein (1972) concerning a cultural or social basis for differences in language use. Bernstein believes that "forms of socialization orient . . . towards speech codes which control access to relatively context-based or relatively context-independent meaning." These speech codes are divided into what he calls "elaborated" and "restricted" codes. By the term "elaborated codes," he means those that "orient their users toward universalistic meanings," and "restricted codes" are those that "orient, sensitize their user to particularistic

meanings." The expression "forms of socialization" refers to "the process whereby the biological is transformed into a specific cultural being." In other words, socioeconomic status influences our use of either general or specific language, and any problems with linguistic codes must be investigated according to our status in society.

If Bernstein's theory is applied to limited English writers' use of words, sentences, and T-units, it might explain why they had more quantitative success with Task I than with Task II. Task I was a narrative/descriptive assignment and therefore more context-bound. The subgroup assumed that their audience knew what they were talking about in describing their best quality, and as a result, they found it easier to produce more words. At the same time, their assumption of too much on the part of their audience meant that meanings were often not very explicit as a fragment from student #10's essay demonstrates:

> One good example of my quality would probally be at McDonald's . . .

What the writer actually meant to say was that he could exemplify his quality well by narrating an incident that occurred at McDonald's where he works. Instead of making his meaning clear, the writer left out important

bits of information which he expected the reader to supply. It is in this sense, then, that the writer uses a "restricted" code; that is, he confines his specific meaning to the context. In other words, he uses language in a way that assumes reader and writer share much of the context.

Task II, however, was a comparison-contrast assignment that required context-free language. In a context-free assignment, the writers must assume that their audience does not know what they are talking about, and they need to supply explicit information by elaborating on their subject a little more. The subgroup had difficulty doing this as the following passage from student #3's essay demonstrates:

> These kinds of ads are realy trying to put you in there place, And they are trying to show you examples of people who smoke Cigarettes.

What the writer probably meant to say was that cigarette ads ("these kinds of ads") are really trying to put the consumer ("you") in the models' ("there") place, and the advertiser ("they") is trying to present examples of the type of people who smoke Vantage cigarettes.

Instead of elaborating, the limited English writer might be assuming that the reader is looking at the pictures too and thereby achieves a specific instead of a general meaning.

What predisposes writers (or speakers) to a particularistic use of language is social class according to Bernstein. Our place in society influences the way we use language, providing us with certain assumptions about the communicative setting and the communicative act. A student from a lower socioeconomic level will write without elaboration because he or she comes from smaller communities where other people know what he or she knows and therefore elaboration is often not necessary. If Bernstein's theory is correct, then limited English writers tend to write in a restricted code because of their socioeconomic status, which has some implications for the teaching of limited English writers, especially those who are bilingual.

As for limited English writers' skills in the qualitative aspects of the task, Bernstein's theory would account for the fact that the subgroup was not overly concerned with form. A preoccupation with form is a characteristic of the elaborated code user, but the students in the subsample are more concerned with content,

which is a characteristic of the restricted code user. The content of the subsample's compositions is freer, loosely woven (due to lack of cohesive ties) and disorganized compared with the total sample. Still, paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence, which are elements of form, were not significantly affected in the compositions by the aim of discourse. In other words, the students did poorly regardless of the aim and of the task of the assignment. In the sense that there are no real differences, Bernstein's theory applies in this situation as well.

Yet another theory may illuminate the problem of understanding the writing of limited English writers. This theory is the two-fold explanation of language proficiency proposed by James Cummins (1980). He separates language proficiency into interpersonal and cognitive/academic components which he calls BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) for daily language needs and CALP (Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency) for academic language settings. According to his hypothesis, limited English proficiency students have problems in school because their CALP has not been sufficiently developed. If their CALP has been encouraged in either their first or their second language, it will

manifest itself as one common underlying proficiency. When they fail in school, they do so because of poor CALP in either language.

If Cummins' theory is applied to the compositions of limited English writers, it might possibly explain the difference in the total production of words, sentences, and T-units in Tasks I and II. Task I was a natural communication activity involving BICS in which the writers were concerned with communicating their unique quality to a class of fellow students. Perhaps the subgroup had more to say in this assignment because they were familiar with the words and structures necessary in completing the task.

In contrast, Task II was an artificial linguistic activity requiring the use of higher cognitive skills and more academic language (CALP) because of its analytical nature. It was more difficult for the writers to produce the necessary vocabulary and structures because they were lacking in those skills. Here I do not imply that the subgroup could not do the CALP assignment well eventually; rather, the implication is that they have not been exposed to sufficient CALP up to now which would enable them to acquire the needed skills for successfully completing Task II.

In paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence, the same situation is true. Limited English writers have not been instructed sufficiently in their school career in paragraphing, supplying cohesive ties, and achieving coherence. The data I have gathered so far in this study attest to that fact, but neither the data nor Cummins' theory can explain why the aims of discourse did not greatly affect the scores on the qualitative aspects, or why, in fact, the CALP assignment provoked better (though fewer) structural devices than the non-CALP assignment.

While these theories of the sociology of language are not the only path to an explanation of the writing difficulties of limited English writers as measured in the writing assessment, I believe that they were helpful in placing an area of language competence that needs further investigation in focus, namely the effect of different discourse aims on the quantitative and qualitative outcomes of students' compositions.

Having presented the three theories which may help explain differences across writing tasks in the written production of the subsample, I now intend to show why they performed two to four grade levels below the total sample on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and how their lack of reading skills affected their written performance. The

best indication of global reasons for this state of affairs is found in the personal interviews. To reiterate briefly from the case studies, Alfonso had never read a book in English before he enrolled at U.T. El Paso. Patricia had read a book, a play, several issues of a comic book, two monthly fashion magazines, and a daily newspaper in English, which gave her a better but still incomplete background in reading. Fernie could only recall the title of one book he had read for pleasure and none of the titles of books he had been required to read in high school.

Also, Cynthia could not remember the title of any book she had read, but she could name her favorite fashion magazine. Victor, who did read sports articles in the local newspaper and a sports magazine, nevertheless considered reading books a boring pursuit. Finally, Yolanda did not really like to read at all although she had enjoyed one action-packed novel.

In each and every case, the students had not read sufficiently or widely enough to enable them to handle college level work in reading and writing. The lack of sufficient reading experience, therefore, may be another explanation for the limited writing ability of the students in the subsample. The quantity and quality of

their reading appears to affect their writing performance since reading and writing are part of the same language competence, where reading is the input and writing is the output. (Krashen, 1985) By taking this position on reading, I can account for the incidence of mechanical, grammatical, syntactical, sentential, and organizational problems in the students' papers; that is, the students simply had not had the benefit of rhetorical models in their reading which could help their writing.

In proposing the lack of reading as an explanation, I can also account for the difference in word, sentence, and T-unit totals between Task I and Task II for the subgroup. Task I, which was a description of the writers' unique quality, required little reading knowledge since it drew from the students' own experience. Task II, on the other hand, required reading experience with the rhetorical strategy of comparison and contrast. The fact that the students also had difficulty with paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence provided me with further evidence that they had not read enough, for if they had they might have been better able to handle the techniques of discourse.

Furthermore, the substandard performance of the students in the subsample on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test substantiates my position that limited English writers are

limited English readers as well. As further evidence, the case studies in this investigation show the scarcity of reading matter, notably books, in the students' lives.

Up to this point, I have tried to interpret the writing difficulties of limited English writers by means of theories of the sociology of language and the role of reading. In the final part of this chapter, I would like to clarify the two main issues of this study. The first issue involves the function of Spanish in the written ability of some limited English writers. Although it is a popular hypothesis to blame the writing difficulties of Spanish-speaking students on "Spanish interference," I have shown in the chapter on error analysis that this notion is mistaken except for a few, insignificant structural errors. At the same time, I have shown that all limited English writers--Spanish-speakers, monolingual English speakers, and Black English speakers--had errors in English grammar, usage, and syntax.

In other words, once I had eliminated Spanish as an explanatory hypothesis in the papers of Spanish-speaking students, I needed to find a common denominator in the writing difficulties of the subgroup, Black English speakers and monolingual English speakers included. That common trait was the role that standard written English

played in the students' lives, which is the second issue of this investigation. Thus, it was not the presence of Spanish in the papers of Spanish-speaking students that was the major impediment to effective communication but the absence of basic English skills that was responsible for their writing problems and those of all the students whom I have been referring to as limited English writers.

When we say that someone in our society does not possess basic English skills, we generally mean that the person is incapable of reading and writing in such a way so as to meet the demands of daily life. However, this is not the exact meaning that I intend because the students in the subsample can read and write to satisfy society's demands. Rather, the meaning that I am referring to when I say that the subsample lacks basic English skills is that they do not possess certain behaviors in reading and writing English, from using the right mechanics to reading a passage with comprehension.

These behaviors are necessary for competing in our educational system, but the error and discourse analyses and the results of the Nelson-Denny Reading Test have shown that limited English writers lack these basic linguistic skills. Also, the case studies have shown that the students' patterns of behavior regarding study skills

predispose them to failure. To illustrate briefly, Fernie spends only half an hour on his writing assignments; Cynthia rushes through her homework after working at a part-time job; and Yolanda dislikes writing except for personal letters.

At the same time that the students admitted their lack of effort and their low opinion of reading and writing, they revealed that they had high expectations--to be an engineer, a teacher, a psychologist, etc. They appeared to think they knew what they wanted from a college education, but they were totally unaware of how to achieve it. Without considering the amount of time that had to be expended on reading and writing, they assumed that their mere presence in the classroom was somehow supposed to guarantee their success.

In trying to account for the students' behavior, I was reminded of the theory of Basil Bernstein regarding forms of socialization" that transform a person into a "specific cultural being." (Bernstein, 1972) The basic agent of this socialization for Bernstein is the family. Now, most of the students, with the exception of Yolanda, were the first generation in their family to attend college. As a result, neither the students nor conceivably their family might be aware of what getting a

college education entails: reading more books, acquiring self-discipline, balancing available time better between home, work, and school, sacrificing immediate plans for ultimate goals, and changing attitudes towards scholarly endeavors, to name only a few. If the students were aware, their behavior might well be different and their expectations might also be more realistic. As it is, they act as if they expect to fail in their writing courses, and consequently they often do in a self-fulfilling pattern that absolves them of any guilt and protects their ego.

In this or any other advanced society, the foundations of literacy begin to take root in the home--the child is read to at an early age, the child observes other members of the family in the act of reading books, and the child has access to reading materials in the home when he or she is ready to read independently. From the evidence I have presented in the case studies, it appears as though the students were not exposed to much reading in the home in either English or Spanish. The fact that they have a poor opinion of reading is in itself a corroboration of this evidence. To read requires that the family member withdraw from the immediate physical world to enter into another world of imagination and ideas, which can often be

seen as antisocial behavior by other members of the family and at times even ridiculed. Reading alone, then, often depends not only on the material conditions of the home, such as having a quiet place to read, but also on social conditions such as having the cooperation of other family members in allowing that activity.

Research has shown that early reading exposure fosters language skills in the child. (Smith, 1971; Krashen, 1975) If the limited English writers in this study were not familiarized with books at home, which seems to be the case, they have already missed many valuable years of reading experience and language development. It is not surprising, then, that limited English writers come to college with an average eighth grade reading level, whereas the average freshman at U.T. El Paso is entering at the tenth to twelfth grade level. (Dick et al., 1985) Confronted with this disparity between their actual reading and writing ability and the expectations of their teachers, they become frustrated and eventually fail in their writing courses and others.

Given this circumstance, one wonders if it is possible or even realistic to try to include limited English writers in the writing curriculum as it is presently constituted and in other courses at the

University. Because of the singular position that U.T. El Paso enjoys as the largest university on the Texas-Mexican border with a culturally and linguistically diversified student body, I believe that it is possible and even necessary with some changes involving personnel, methodology, and scheduling. We simply cannot afford to lose all of the various research opportunities--sociological, economic, political, historical, linguistic--that this subgroup of incoming freshmen provide for several departments at the University. If we help them, we could be at the forefront of trying to improve the educational lot of a forgotten group of limited English students.

Therefore, if we accept the contribution that limited English students can make to the University as a whole and to ourselves as teachers, we must strive to provide the help and seek the funds that will support programs to help these students become participating members of our academic community.[15] A few recommendations are: (1) we must recognize that a special writing course staffed by faculty with a knowledge of second language methodology might be necessary for limited English writers; (2) we need to place greater emphasis on reading, both for pleasure and for academic purposes, in our writing courses for this subgroup; and (3) we have to realize that basic

writing courses of three to six credit hours of English (from learning mechanics to acquiring reading skills) might need to be radically restructured to include more hours and more semesters when dealing with limited English writers.

In this way, we can begin to acknowledge that a unique subgroup exists at U.T. El Paso, and we can start to effect the needed changes for the ultimate benefit of the students themselves. I hope that the data pertaining to limited English writers that I have presented in this study will help to increase the awareness of the reader, the University, and researchers in general regarding a subgroup of freshman students with special reading and writing needs.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing the data from the 1983 reading and writing assessment project, I have shown in this investigation three factors that indicate the writing ability of 30 limited English writers (19 Spanish-speaking, 9 monolingual English-speaking, and 2 Black English speaking) in freshman compositions courses at U.T. El Paso. I established the first factor, errors, by means of a systematic analysis of the local reasons for the students' difficulty. The most prevalent type of error I found was mechanical, followed by sentence, vocabulary, pronoun, and verb problems. Because the Spanish-speaking students' difficulty is often attributed to "Spanish interference," I conducted another analysis of Spanish/English errors, which showed that the Spanish language was not responsible for most of their problems with English composition.

After this important revelation, I found that the discourse factor was the second contributor to the students' plight. To arrive at this conclusion, I first did a quantitative analysis of the words, sentences, and T-units that the students produced in each writing task. The findings confirmed my suspicions that the outcome of

the compositions was affected by the discourse aim of the task. In Task I, the fact that the students were writing a narrative/descriptive paper for a specific audience (their classmates) may have made the assignment more real to them. Also, the social purpose of the task could have enabled them to talk about their quality more freely, to write about it more prolifically, and to share their experiences more openly with others. In contrast, Task II was a comparison-contrast assignment. The students produced fewer words, sentences, and T-units when the task was unfamiliar, the audience was unspecified, and the purpose was unclear to them. Next, I performed a qualitative analysis of the students' control of paragraphing, cohesion, and coherence in each task, which revealed that the discourse aim did not have a significant impact on the outcome.

The third factor I found which appeared to affect the writing ability of limited English students was reading, based on their scores on the Nelson-Denny Reading Test and their own testimony in the case studies. Their reading scores revealed that the average grade equivalence attained was on the eighth grade level, and the interviews that I conducted with them uncovered their inadequate background in reading and their lack of effort where

reading and writing were concerned. Over and over again in their stories,I could not help but notice the curious paradox between their expectations and their actions.

To help in interpreting much of the data, I then turned to three current theories of the sociology of language which helped me understand that questions of language competence are inextricably bound to the idea of sociocultural context and that there are multiple reasons, both local and global, for the underachievement of limited English writers. I, therefore, was led to the conclusion that reading, though not the answer to all of the students' problems, is certainly a major consideration. Reading and writing are part of a continuum, and both abilities must be improved in trying to find a working solution in the writing performance of limited English writers.

Through reading especially, we are able to transcend the reality of our own lives, and we can experience other thoughts, other worlds, and other realities. Reading can also help to obliterate ethnic and socioeconomic differences by enabling everyone to take advantage of the limitless opportunities for cognitive growth that it offers. If we are to help limited English writers, I see our duty as educators as providing opportunities for them

to change their attitudes and lives in certain ways regarding reading. Also, we can insure that reading is included in writing courses designed for them, and we can allow them sufficient time to develop as readers and writers.

In this manner, we can prepare limited English readers and writers for college level work. In meeting their reading and writing needs, we will not be placing them in a peculiar position between ESOL and English. Instead, they will find their rightful place inside of the freshman English curriculum.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Prompt I

Each of us has a quality that makes us feel good about ourselves. It may be that we are honest, or that we have a good sense of humor. Whatever it is, we hope that others will recognize this trait and like us for it. Think of your many qualities, and pick one that you would most like to be appreciated for.

Pretend that you are in a small class where no one knows each other. You have been asked to introduce yourself by writing an essay which will be read to the others. In this essay, state the quality you would most like your classmates to recognize in you and tell an experience from your life that shows your being that way. Tell the experience in such a way that your classmates can clearly see the trait you have.

APPENDIX B

UTEP WRITING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT, FALL 1983
WRITING EXERCISE #2

On the enclosed pages, you will find directions for a writing task. After your instructor has answered any questions you may have about the task, you may begin work during the remainder of the class period.

Please follow these directions:

1. Complete the writing task by Tuesday, September 13, and remember to bring it to class by that day.

2. Write your essay in black ink, LEGIBLY. Blue inks sometimes do not copy well. Do not type.

3. Do your best writing.

4. Do not write your name on any of the papers. Instead, write your Student ID number at the top of each page you turn in. Also, write your class and course code number, which your instructor will give you, at the top of each page.

5. If you jot down any notes or write preliminary drafts, turn them in also, labeled "notes" or "draft." Put them behind the final copy of your essay.

6. Keep track of the time you spend on this project, including the time in this class. Fill in the blanks below when you turn in the materials.

   I spent approximately _____ hours, and

   _____ minutes on this writing task.

7. Turn in these materials with your essay and any other writing you did connected with it. Your teacher will have paper clips for you to use.

8. Complete this information:

Student ID number _____

Course call number _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

Prompt II

It is said that advertisers have a reason for everything they put in an ad. The background, the position of every object, and the type of person appearing in the ad are carefully planned. The words used to advertise the product are also selected for specific purposes.

Attached are two ads. They are for the same cigarette brand, yet each ad is somewhat different. Compare and contrast the two ads. Who are the advertisers trying to sell their product to? What appeals are being used in each ad to persuade this audience? What specific details in each ad accomplish these appeals?

Write an essay in which you report your analysis of the two ads.

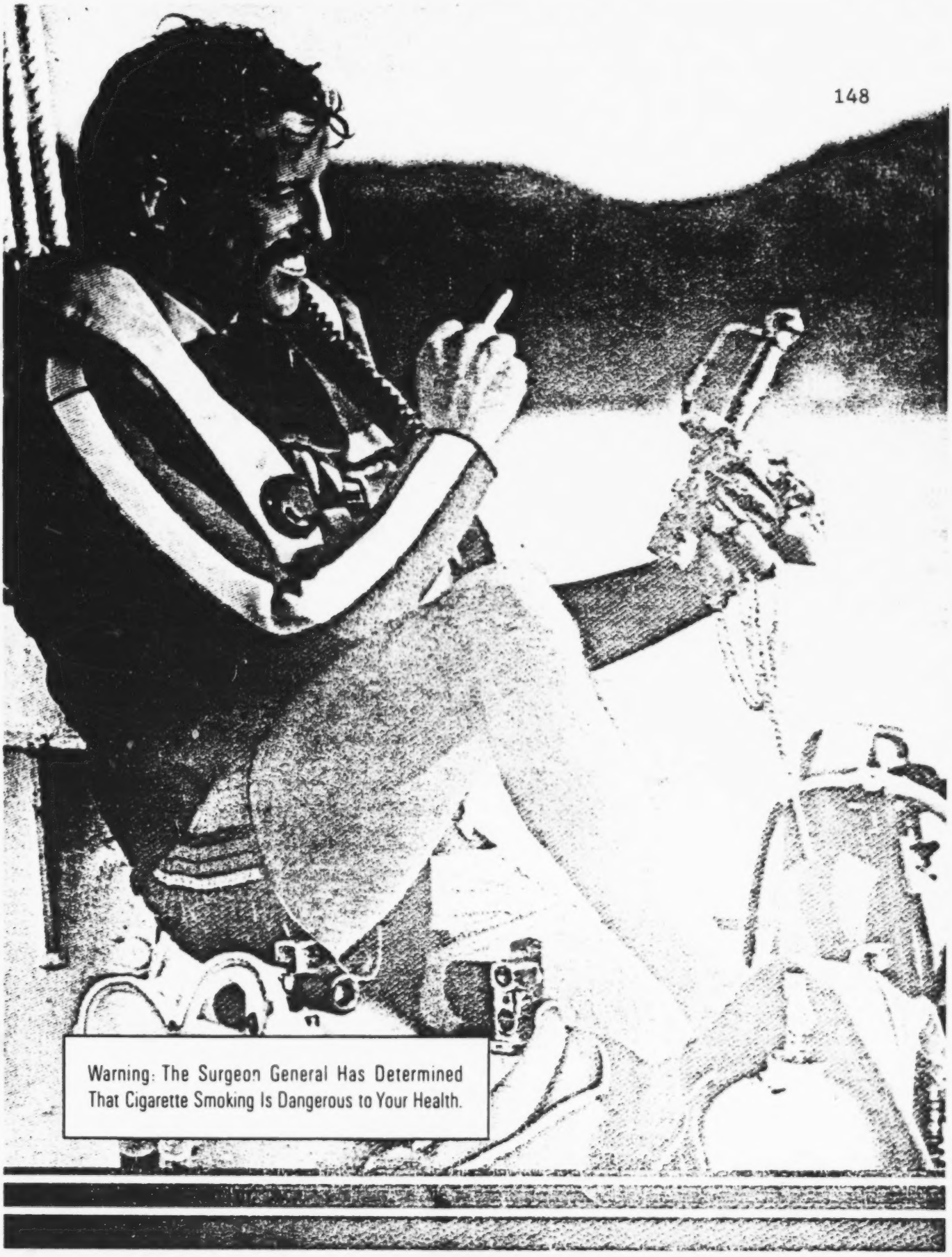
ULTRA LIGHTS: 5 mg. "tar", 0.5 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.
FILTER: 9 mg. "tar", 0.7 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette. FTC Report DEC. '81.
146
Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Making your mark.

147

Remember when you couldn't draw a straight line?
Then a great high school art teacher changed your life.
You showed the talent. You put in the work. And now
you're getting ready for your first gallery show.

You're tasting success and it sure tastes good.


148
Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

A rich reward.

You live in the best of all possible worlds. A world that satisfies your love for the past—and your love for the sea. You spend your days looking for sunken wrecks. Not just for treasure. But to find out how people once lived. And today... 70 feet down... you discovered the past and brought it up to the present.

You're tasting success and it sure tastes good.

VANTAGE
THE TASTE OF SUCCESS

APPENDIX C

Survey Questionnaire

Before answering this questionnaire:

1. Where you would fill in your name, please write your course call number. It will have five numbers. Ask your instructor for help if you do not know the numbers. Please write the data next to this number.

2. Fill in your student identification number (social security number) in the section labeled "IDENTIFICATION NUMBER." Be sure to fill in the blank to the right of each number.

3. If you have any difficulty responding to an item, please write why next to that item. Also, please write your student identification number on the first page of this questionnaire to signal our attention.

* *

1. Before this semester, where did you receive your most recent training in writing?
   1 UTEP
   2 High School
   3 El Paso Community College (EPCC)
   4 A four-year college other than UTEP
   5 A two-year college other than EPCC

2. What writing course are you enrolled in? (select one)
   1 3110 with 3001
   2 3110
   3 3111
   4 6111
   5 3112

3. Where did you receive most of your pre-college education? (If none of the categories below applies to you, leave number 3 on the answer sheet blank.)
   1 El Paso School System
   2 Ysleta School System
   3 A private school system in El Paso
   4 A school system within a 60 mile radius of El Paso (for example: Socorro, Gadsden, Clint, Canutillo)
   5 Mexico

4. What is your sex? (Please be sure you are filling in number 4 on the answer sheet.)
   1 Female
   2 Male

5. What is your age?
   1 17-20 years old
   2 21-25 years old
   3 26-30 years old
   4 31-35 years old
   5 36 years or older

6. Do you consider yourself bilingual in English and Spanish?
   1 Yes
   2 No

7. Which language is easier for you to speak?
   1 English
   2 Spanish
   3 Speak both with equal ease

8. Which language is easier for you to read?
   1 English
   2 Spanish
   3 Read both with equal ease

9. Which language is easier for you to write?
   1 English
   2 Spanish
   3 Write both with equal ease

10. Which is the highest educational level completed by either one of your parents? (Pick only one response.)
    1 Did not complete high school
    2 Completed high school (high school diploma)
    3 Completed 2 years of college (at either a 2 or 4 year institution)
    4 Completed undergraduate college (BA or BS/4 year degree)
    5 Completed graduate school (Masters degree, MA/doctorate, medical, law degree)

11. What is the longest piece of writing you have done?
    1 One page or under
    2 Two to five pages
    3 Six to ten pages
    4 Eleven to twenty pages
    5 Twenty pages or more

12. Please give your best estimate as to how much (on the average) you have written during the past four years. Include letters, journals, assignments, essays, notes, memos, any work-related writing, or, in other words, everything that includes writing sentences.
    1 About one page of writing every month
    2 More than one page a month, but no more than four pages a month--about one a week
    3 Between two and six pages a week
    4 Between seven and ten pages a week--at least a page (or more) every day
    5 More than two pages of writing every day

13. Have you ever typed or had a writing assignment typed?
    1 Yes
    2 No

14. Have you ever kept a daily writing journal or diary for six months or more?
    1 Yes
    2 No

15. Have you ever written a paper where it was necessary to document information with footnotes, bibliography, or references?
    1 Yes
    2 No

16. Have you ever done writing exercises where you combined sentences together?
    1 Regularly--two or more times a week for at least six months
    2 Sometimes--about once a week for at least a few months
    3 Rarely--about once a month for at least a few months
    4 Never

17. In your past writing instruction were you encouraged to write in a manner without concern for spelling and grammar, but to write whatever comes to your mind, whatever thoughts you might be having? This is sometimes referred to as free-writing.
    1 Regularly--two or more times a week for at least six months
    2 Sometimes--about once a week for at least a few months
    3 Rarely--about once a month for at least a few months
    4 Never

18. Have you ever conferenced with an instructor about your writing?
    1 Regularly--two or more times a week for at least six months
    2 Sometimes--about once a week for at least a few months
    3 Rarely--about once a month for at least a few months
    4 Never

19. Do you ever share your writing with classmates, family, or friends?
    1 Always
    2 Usually
    3 Sometimes
    4 Rarely
    5 Never

20. When writing, do you ever revise a draft by eliminating or adding paragraphs or sections?
    1 Always
    2 Usually
    3 Sometimes
    4 Rarely
    5 Never

21. When writing, do you ever revise a draft by changing sentences, spelling, punctuation, or grammar?
    1 Always
    2 Usually
    3 Sometimes
    4 Rarely
    5 Never

22. Before you write, do you engage in any activity to get you thinking about your subject such as quiet time to think, talking to others, jotting notes, making outlines, etc.?
    1 Always
    2 Usually
    3 Sometimes
    4 Rarely
    5 Never

23. Given a choice, which type of writing listed below would you prefer doing?
    1 Writing based on personal experience (autobiographical)
    2 Writing in which you explain something
    3 Writing in which you persuade others
    4 Fiction, or poetry, or drama
    5 Makes no difference (If you select this response, skip the next item.)

24. For your second choice, which type of writing would you select?
    1 Writing based on personal experience (autobiographical)
    2 Writing in which you explain something
    3 Writing in which you persuade others
    4 Fiction, or poetry, or drama
    5 Makes no difference

25. Do you believe writing well is important in order to do well in your coursework here at UTEP?
    1 Yes
    2 No
    3 Do not know

26. Do you believe writing well is important in order to do well in your career?
    1 Yes
    2 No
    3 Do not know

27. Do you enjoy writing?
    1 Always
    2 Usually
    3 Sometimes
    4 Rarely
    5 Never

28. How would you evaluate the quality of your writing instruction over the last few years?
    1 Excellent
    2 Good
    3 Fair
    4 Poor
    5 Non-existent

29. Compared with other students entering UTEP, what is your best estimate of your writing ability?
    1 Excellent
    2 Good
    3 Fair
    4 Poor
    5 Non-existent

30. Do you feel it is within your control to improve your writing ability?
    1 Very much
    2 Somewhat
    3 Very little
    4 Not at all
    5 Do not know

31. In the last 2 years, have you put much effort into improving your writing ability?
    1 Very much
    2 Somewhat
    3 Very little
    4 Not at all

Thank you for your time. Your participation in this study is appreciated.

APPENDIX D
Fall 1983 Assessment

Evaluator _____

Student's Social Security Number _____

Course Call Number _____

Task 1 (personal attribute) or Task 2 (advertisement) ____

For any item that is non-ratable, please put zero(es) in the boxes and comment at the end of the sheet. See the explanation booklet if necessary for help with * items.

Task late? 1 - no 2 - yes _____

Total number of words in piece _____

Total number of sentences in piece _____

Total number of T-units in piece _____

*Cohesion _____
1 Little or no evidence of cohesion
2 Attempts at cohesion
3 Cohesion, no or little coherence
4 Coherence
5 Well done cohesion and coherence

*Paragraphing _____
1 No paragraphs, no sections to paragraph
2 Paragraphs but no true sections
3 No paragraphs but true sections
4 A mixture of 2 & 3 poorly done
5 A mixture of 2 & 3 appropriately done

Number of sentence fragments ..... _____

Number of run-on sentences ..... _____

Total number of awkward sentences ..... _____

Number of instances of faulty parallelism ..... _____

Student's Social Security Number _____
Task 1 or 2? _____

Number of instances of unclear pronoun reference _____

Number of illogical constructions ..... _____

Number of homonym errors ..... _____

Total number of misspelled words ..... _____

Number of difficult misspelled words ..... _____

Number of moderately difficult misspelled words _____

Number of easy words misspelled ..... _____

Number of subject/verb agreement errors ..... _____

Number of pronoun agreement errors ..... _____

Total punctuation errors ..... _____

Number of capitalization errors ..... _____

Number of comma errors ..... _____

Number of possession errors ..... _____

Number of word choice errors ..... _____

APPENDIX E

Fall 1983 Assessment
Spanish/English Assessment

Evaluator _____

Student's Social Security Number _____

Course Call Number _____

Task 1 (personal attribute) or Task 2 (advertisement)? ___

(This evaluation sheet is based on the work of Jorge M. Guitart, Dept. of Modern Languages, SUNY at Buffalo.)

Next to each item, mark each occurrence on the blank line. Tally the occurrences for each item, and put this number in the blank. Please write any comments you might have on the bottom or back of these sheets. Thank you.

Incorrect selection due to lack of lexical differentiation in Spanish

1. 'I went for that' for 'I went because of that' 'go by the window' for 'go through the window' 'it's in the box' for 'it's on the box' 'make me a favor; do that phone call' for 'do me a favor; make that phone call' 'say me please' for 'tell me please'

   Watch for: Because of, for, by, through, in, on, make/do, say/tell

   _____1._____

Lack of correspondence of prepositions in idioms

2. I dreamed with you (meaning of) In love of her (with) It depends of you (on) I think in you (of)

   _____2._____

Faulty agreement

3. Redundant noun-modifier number agreement--reds houses (In Spanish noun and modifiers agree in number.)

   _____3._____

Student's Social Security Number _____
Task 1 or 2? _____

4. Faulty gender agreement--his father meaning her father his husband meaning her husband (In Spanish there is gender agreement between noun and possessive pronoun)

_____4._____

5. Faulty subject/verb agreement with 2nd person singular 'you wants' and with 3rd person singular 'he say'

_____5._____

Particle omission

6. Omission of infinitive marker--'I want study' for 'I want to study' 'Know you is love you' for 'to know you is to love you'

_____6._____

7. Omission of auxiliary do--watch for questions 'How he knows that?' watch for negation 'I no (or not) want to go'

_____7._____

8. Omission of preposition in two-word verbs--'We listened records' 'Look the clouds'

_____8._____

9. Omission of indefinite article before predicate nominatives 'My father is lawyer' and in the expression "What a ..." 'What face.' 'What joke.'

_____9._____

10. Omission of by from by ...ing adverbial phrases of manner 'He accomplished it persuading us' for '... by persuading us.'

_____10._____

11. Omission of subject pronouns (especially it) 'Is very late' 'Wrote many books' for 'he wrote'

_____11._____

12. The use of definite article with subject nouns in sentences expressing generalizations where in English the noun would not be modified by such an article--'The meat is expensive.' meaning 'Meat [in general] is expensive.' 'The women get better grades.' meaning 'Women [in general] get better grades.' 'The English is hard.' meaning 'English is hard.'

_____12._____

Student's Social Security Number _____
Task 1 or 2? _____

13. Use of clauses instead of to/for complement phrases with verbs of influence--'I want that he go' for 'I want him to go' 'he says that you come' for 'he says for you to come' 'he begged him that he leave' for 'he begged him to leave'

_____13._____

14. Use of infinitive instead of -ing form in nominalizations--'To cook is my hobby' (meaning cooking)--and after prepositions in adverbial phrases--'He left with eat' (meaning 'He left without eating') 'Jailed for drive while intoxicated' (meaning 'Jailed for driving...)

_____14._____

15. Use of simple present instead of progressive for future 'I leave' for 'I'm leaving'

_____15._____

16. Use of 'to go to' instead of 'to be going to' 'I go to see' for 'I'm going to see'

_____16._____

MOST IMPORTANT

Please write down any language "error" you believe may be caused by Spanish/English interference. Write the original construction and what you believe the writer meant to say.

APPENDIX F

UTEP Writing Assessment: Quantifiable Features

Evaluator _____

Student's Social Security No. _____

Task 1 (Personal Attribute) or Task 2 (Advertisement) ____

Total number of words in piece _____

Total number of sentences in piece _____

Total number of T-units in piece _____

(Enter one) Single paragraph (1) _____

Multi-paragraph (2) _____

Sentence Problems-- Total number each error

- Fragments _____
- Run-ons and comma splices _____
- Garbled Syntax _____

Inflection problems--

- Incorrect noun plurals _____
- Incorrect tense markers _____
  (e.g., no -ed for regular past tense verbs, incorrect irregular verb form)
- Hypercorrections _____
  (e.g., -ed after did or other modal, or inflected infinitive form)
- Subject-verb agreement _____

Pronoun problems--

Wrong case _____

Faulty number agreement _____

Faulty reference _____

Mechanics--

Punctuation error (other than comma splice) _____

Misspelled words _____

Homonym problems _____

Apostrophe misused or missing when needed _____

NOTES

NOTES

1. I will use the term error in order to distinguish this phenomenon from a mistake, which can be a random guess or a "slip." (Brown, 1980)
2. Only one-third of all incoming students participated in the writing assessment project, but all incoming students answered the survey questionnaire. Since the members of the Writing Assessment Committee (John A. R. Dick, Barbara L. Gordon, and Howard J. Scheiber) are reporting on the results of the questionnaire, I do not go into great detail about it in this study.
3. The information on task, class level, ratings, and percentages for the total sample are used by permission of the Writing Assessment Committee.
4. Interference is also known as negative transfer, i.e., something that was previously learned interferes with something that is newly acquired. (Brown, 1980)
5. "Word choice" is a broad category which can include neologisms and deviations from standard usage.

6. It has been pointed out that the four major categories of Table 3 are not exactly parallel. Nevertheless, I followed this grouping to ensure some uniformity between Table 3 and the original coding sheet.
7. The checklist of errors due to Spanish was adapted by the Writing Assessment Committee from a handout prepared by Jorge Guitart, Department of Modern Languages, SUNY at Buffalo, after Stockwell, Bowen, and Martin's work.
8. By discourse in this chapter I mean the parts that constitute the whole in a piece of writing.
9. Normally, the length of the T-unit is regarded as the measure of syntactic maturity (Hunt, 1965), but for the purposes of the writing assessment the number of T-units produced by the student was the criterion.
10. The common notion of cohesion is the way the parts in a piece of writing "stick together."
11. Both the paragraph scoring guide and the cohesion scoring guide were segments of the checklist of English errors.

12. I am indebted to Carolyn O'Hearn for the use of the reading survey, which she has adapted for classroom use from Burmeister's Reading Strategies for Middle and Secondary School Teachers, second edition.
13. A discrete-point test measures only one point, one component, and one skill in language at a time. (Cohen, 1980)
14. The information on results from the total sample in the writing assessment project are used through the courtesy of the Writing Assessment Committee.
15. A similar viewpoint is expressed by Mike Rose, Director of Freshman Writing at the University of California at Los Angeles, in his recent article in College English.

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